PART II.

CHAPTER I. LADY BYRON AS I KNEW HER.

An editorial in The London Times' of Sept. 18 says:--

> 'The perplexing feature in this "True Story" is, that it is impossible to distinguish what part in it is the editress's, and what Lady Byron's own. We are given the impression made on Mrs. Stowe's mind by Lady Byron's statements; but it would have been more satisfactory if the statement itself had been reproduced as bare as possible, and been left to make its own impression on the public.'

In reply to this, I will say, that in my article I gave a brief synopsis of the subject-matter of Lady Byron's communications; and I think it must be quite evident to the world that the main fact on which the story turns was one which could not possibly be misunderstood, and the remembrance of which no lapse of time could ever weaken.

Lady Byron's communications were made to me in language clear, precise, terrible; and many of her phrases and sentences I could repeat at this day, word for word. But if I had reproduced them at first, as 'The Times' suggests, word for word, the public horror and incredulity would have been doubled. It was necessary that the brutality of the story

should, in some degree, be veiled and softened.

The publication, by Lord Lindsay, of Lady Anne Barnard's communication, makes it now possible to tell fully, and in Lady Byron's own words, certain incidents that yet remain untold. To me, who know the whole history, the revelations in Lady Anne's account, and the story related by Lady Byron, are like fragments of a dissected map: they fit together, piece by piece, and form one connected whole.

In confirmation of the general facts of this interview, I have the testimony of a sister who accompanied me on this visit, and to whom, immediately after it, I recounted the story.

Her testimony on the subject is as follows:--

'MY DEAR SISTER,--I have a perfect recollection of going with you to visit Lady Byron at the time spoken of in your published article. We arrived at her house in the morning; and, after lunch, Lady Byron and yourself spent the whole time till evening alone together.

'After we retired to our apartment that night, you related to me the story given in your published account, though with many more particulars than you have yet thought fit to give to the public.

'You stated to me that Lady Byron was strongly impressed with the idea that it might be her duty to publish a statement during her lifetime, and also the reasons which induced her to think so. You appeared at

that time quite disposed to think that justice required this step, and asked my opinion. We passed most of the night in conversation on the subject,--a conversation often resumed, from time to time, during several weeks in which you were considering what opinion to give.

'I was strongly of opinion that justice required the publication of the truth, but felt exceedingly averse to its being done by Lady Byron herself during her own lifetime, when she personally would be subject to the comments and misconceptions of motives which would certainly follow such a communication.

'Your sister,

'M. F. PERKINS.'

I am now about to complete the account of my conversation with Lady Byron; but as the credibility of a history depends greatly on the character of its narrator, and as especial pains have been taken to destroy the belief in this story by representing it to be the wanderings of a broken-down mind in a state of dotage and mental hallucination, I shall preface the narrative with some account of Lady Byron as she was during the time of our mutual acquaintance and friendship.

This account may, perhaps, be deemed superfluous in England, where so many knew her; but in America, where, from Maine to California, her character has been discussed and traduced, it is of importance to give interested thousands an opportunity of learning what kind of a woman Lady

Byron was.

Her character as given by Lord Byron in his Journal, after her first refusal of him, is this:--

> 'She is a very superior woman, and very little spoiled; which is strange in an heiress, a girl of twenty, a peeress that is to be in her own right, an only child, and a savante, who has always had her own way. She is a poetess, a mathematician, a metaphysician; yet, withal, very kind, generous, and gentle, with very little pretension. Any other head would be turned with half her acquisitions and a tenth of her advantages.'

Such was Lady Byron at twenty. I formed her acquaintance in the year 1853, during my first visit in England. I met her at a lunch-party in the house of one of her friends.

The party had many notables; but, among them all, my attention was fixed principally on Lady Byron. She was at this time sixty-one years of age, but still had, to a remarkable degree, that personal attraction which is commonly considered to belong only to youth and beauty.

Her form was slight, giving an impression of fragility; her motions were both graceful and decided; her eyes bright, and full of interest and quick observation. Her silvery-white hair seemed to lend a grace to the transparent purity of her complexion, and her small hands had a pearly whiteness. I recollect she wore a plain widow's cap of a transparent

material; and was dressed in some delicate shade of lavender, which harmonised well with her complexion.

When I was introduced to her, I felt in a moment the words of her husband:--

'There was awe in the homage that she drew;
Her spirit seemed as seated on a throne.'

Calm, self-poised, and thoughtful, she seemed to me rather to resemble an interested spectator of the world's affairs, than an actor involved in its trials; yet the sweetness of her smile, and a certain very delicate sense of humour in her remarks, made the way of acquaintance easy.

Her first remarks were a little playful; but in a few moments we were speaking on what every one in those days was talking to me about,--the slavery question in America.

It need not be remarked, that, when any one subject especially occupies the public mind, those known to be interested in it are compelled to listen to many weary platitudes. Lady Byron's remarks, however, caught my ear and arrested my attention by their peculiar incisive quality, their originality, and the evidence they gave that she was as well informed on all our matters as the best American statesman could be. I had no wearisome course to go over with her as to the difference between the General Government and State Governments, nor explanations of the United States Constitution; for she had the whole before her mind with a

perfect clearness. Her morality upon the slavery question, too, impressed me as something far higher and deeper than the common sentimentalism of the day. Many of her words surprised me greatly, and gave me new material for thought.

I found I was in company with a commanding mind, and hastened to gain instruction from her on another point where my interest had been aroused. I had recently been much excited by Kingsley's novels, 'Alton Locke' and 'Yeast,' on the position of religious thought in England. From these works I had gathered, that under the apparent placid uniformity of the Established Church of England, and of 'good society' as founded on it, there was moving a secret current of speculative enquiry, doubt, and dissent; but I had met, as yet, with no person among my various acquaintances in England who seemed either aware of this fact, or able to guide my mind respecting it. The moment I mentioned the subject to Lady Byron, I received an answer which showed me that the whole ground was familiar to her, and that she was capable of giving me full information. She had studied with careful thoughtfulness all the social and religious tendencies of England during her generation. One of her remarks has often since occurred to me. Speaking of the Oxford movement, she said the time had come when the English Church could no longer remain as it was. It must either restore the past, or create a future. The Oxford movement attempted the former; and of the future she was beginning to speak, when our conversation was interrupted by the presentation of other parties.

Subsequently, in reply to a note from her on some benevolent business, I

alluded to that conversation, and expressed a wish that she would finish giving me her views of the religious state of England. A portion of the letter that she wrote me in reply I insert, as being very characteristic in many respects:--

'Various causes have been assigned for the decaying state of the English Church; which seems the more strange, because the clergy have improved, morally and intellectually, in the last twenty years. Then why should their influence be diminished? I think it is owing to the diffusion of a spirit of free enquiry.

'Doubts have arisen in the minds of many who are unhappily bound by subscription not to doubt; and, in consequence, they are habitually pretending either to believe or to disbelieve. The state of Denmark cannot but be rotten, when to seem is the first object of the witnesses of truth.

'They may lead better lives, and bring forward abler arguments; but their efforts are paralysed by that unsoundness. I see the High Churchman professing to believe in the existence of a church, when the most palpable facts must show him that no such church exists; the "Low" Churchman professing to believe in exceptional interpositions which his philosophy secretly questions; the "Broad" Churchman professing as absolute an attachment to the Established Church as the narrowest could feel, while he is preaching such principles as will at last pull it down.

'I ask you, my friend, whether there would not be more faith, as well as earnestness, if all would speak out. There would be more unanimity too, because they would all agree in a certain basis. Would not a wider love supersede the creed-bound charity of sects?

'I am aware that I have touched on a point of difference between us, and I will not regret it; for I think the differences of mind are analogous to those differences of nature, which, in the most comprehensive survey, are the very elements of harmony.

'I am not at all prone to put forth my own opinions; but the tone in which you have written to me claims an unusual degree of openness on my part. I look upon creeds of all kinds as chains,--far worse chains than those you would break,--as the causes of much hypocrisy and infidelity. I hold it to be a sin to make a child say, "I believe." Lead it to utter that belief spontaneously. I also consider the institution of an exclusive priesthood, though having been of service in some respects, as retarding the progress of Christianity at present. I desire to see a lay ministry.

'I will not give you more of my heterodoxy at present: perhaps I need your pardon, connected as you are with the Church, for having said so much.

'There are causes of decay known to be at work in my frame, which lead me to believe I may not have time to grow wiser; and I must therefore leave it to others to correct the conclusions I have now formed from

my life's experience. I should feel happy to discuss them personally with you; for it would be soul to soul. In that confidence I am yours most truly,

'A. I. NOEL BYRON.'

It is not necessary to prove to the reader that this letter is not in the style of a broken-down old woman subject to mental hallucinations. It shows Lady Byron's habits of clear, searching analysis, her thoughtfulness, and, above all, that peculiar reverence for truth and sincerity which was a leading characteristic of her moral nature. {139} It also shows her views of the probable shortness of her stay on earth, derived from the opinion of physicians about her disease, which was a gradual ossification of the lungs. It has been asserted that pulmonary diseases, while they slowly and surely sap the physical life, often appear to give added vigour to the play of the moral and intellectual powers.

I parted from Lady Byron, feeling richer in that I had found one more pearl of great price on the shore of life.

Three years after this, I visited England to obtain a copyright for the issue of my novel of 'Dred.'

The hope of once more seeing Lady Byron was one of the brightest anticipations held out to me in this journey. I found London quite deserted; but, hearing that Lady Byron was still in town, I sent to her,

saying in my note, that, in case she was not well enough to call, I would visit her. Her reply I give:--

'MY DEAR FRIEND,--I will be indebted to you for our meeting, as I am barely able to leave my room. It is not a time for small personalities, if they could ever exist with you; and, dressed or undressed, I shall hope to see you after two o'clock.

'Yours very truly,

'A. I. NOEL BYRON.'

I found Lady Byron in her sick-room,--that place which she made so different from the chamber of ordinary invalids. Her sick-room seemed only a telegraphic station whence her vivid mind was flashing out all over the world.

By her bedside stood a table covered with books, pamphlets, and files of letters, all arranged with exquisite order, and each expressing some of her varied interests. From that sick-bed she still directed, with systematic care, her various works of benevolence, and watched with intelligent attention the course of science, literature, and religion; and the versatility and activity of her mind, the flow of brilliant and penetrating thought on all the topics of the day, gave to the conversations of her retired room a peculiar charm. You forgot that she was an invalid; for she rarely had a word of her own personalities, and the charm of her conversation carried you invariably from herself to the

subjects of which she was thinking. All the new books, the literature of the hour, were lighted up by her keen, searching, yet always kindly criticism; and it was charming to get her fresh, genuine, clear-cut modes of expression, so different from the world-worn phrases of what is called good society. Her opinions were always perfectly clear and positive, and given with the freedom of one who has long stood in a position to judge the world and its ways from her own standpoint. But it was not merely in general literature and science that her heart lay; it was following always with eager interest the progress of humanity over the whole world.

This was the period of the great battle for liberty in Kansas. The English papers were daily filled with the thrilling particulars of that desperate struggle, and Lady Byron entered with heart and soul into it.

Her first letter to me, at this time, is on this subject. It was while 'Dred' was going through the press.

'CAMBRIDGE TERRACE, Aug. 15.

'MY DEAR MRS. STOWE,--Messrs. Chambers liked the proposal to publish the Kansas Letters. The more the public know of these matters, the better prepared they will be for your book. The moment for its publication seems well chosen. There is always in England a floating fund of sympathy for what is above the everyday sordid cares of life; and these better feelings, so nobly invested for the last two years in Florence Nightingale's career, are just set free. To what will they next be attached? If you can lay hold of them, they may bring about a

deeper abolition than any legislative one,--the abolition of the heart-heresy that man's worth comes, not from God, but from man.

'I have been obliged to give up exertion again, but hope soon to be able to call and make the acquaintance of your daughters. In case you wish to consult H. Martineau's pamphlets, I send more copies. Do not think of answering: I have occupied too much of your time in reading.

'Yours affectionately,

'A. I. NOEL BYRON.'

As soon as a copy of 'Dred' was through the press, I sent it to her, saying that I had been reproved by some excellent people for representing too faithfully the profane language of some of the wicked characters. To this she sent the following reply:--

'Your book, dear Mrs. Stowe, is of the little leaven kind, and must prove a great moral force; perhaps not manifestly so much as secretly. And yet I can hardly conceive so much power without immediate and sensible effects: only there will be a strong disposition to resist on the part of all hollow-hearted professors of religion, whose heathenisms you so unsparingly expose. They have a class feeling like others.

'To the young, and to those who do not reflect much on what is offered to their belief, you will do great good by showing how spiritual food

is often adulterated. The bread from heaven is in the same case as bakers' bread.

'If there is truth in what I heard Lord Byron say, that works of fiction live only by the amount of truth which they contain, your story is sure of a long life. Of the few critiques I have seen, the best is in "The Examiner." I find an obtuseness as to the spirit and aim of the book, as if you had designed to make the best novel of the season, or to keep up the reputation of one. You are reproached, as Walter Scott was, with too much scriptural quotation; not, that I have heard, with phrases of an opposite character.

'The effects of such reading till a late hour one evening appeared to influence me very singularly in a dream. The most horrible spectres presented themselves, and I woke in an agony of fear; but a faith still stronger arose, and I became courageous from trust in God, and felt calm. Did you do this? It is very insignificant among the many things you certainly will do unknown to yourself. I know more than ever before how to value communion with you. I have sent Robertson's Sermons for you; and, with kind regards to your family, am

'Yours affectionately,

'A. I. NOEL BYRON.'

I was struck in this note with the mention of Lord Byron, and, the next time I saw her, alluded to it, and remarked upon the peculiar qualities

of his mind as shown in some of his more serious conversations with Dr. Kennedy.

She seemed pleased to continue the subject, and went on to say many things of his singular character and genius, more penetrating and more appreciative than is often met with among critics.

I told her that I had been from childhood powerfully influenced by him; and began to tell her how much, as a child, I had been affected by the news of his death,--giving up all my plays, and going off to a lonely hillside, where I spent the afternoon thinking of him. She interrupted me before I had quite finished, with a quick, impulsive movement. 'I know all that,' she said: 'I heard it all from Mrs. ---; and it was one of the things that made me wish to know you. I think you could understand him.' We talked for some time of him then; she, with her pale face slightly flushed, speaking, as any other great man's widow might, only of what was purest and best in his works, and what were his undeniable virtues and good traits, especially in early life. She told me many pleasant little speeches made by him to herself; and, though there was running through all this a shade of melancholy, one could never have conjectured that there were under all any deeper recollections than the circumstances of an ordinary separation might bring.

Not many days after, with the unselfishness which was so marked a trait with her, she chose a day when she could be out of her room, and invited our family party, consisting of my husband, sister, and children, to lunch with her.

What showed itself especially in this interview was her tenderness for all young people. She had often enquired after mine; asked about their characters, habits, and tastes; and on this occasion she found an opportunity to talk with each one separately, and to make them all feel at ease, so that they were able to talk with her. She seemed interested to point out to them what they should see and study in London; and the charm of her conversation left on their minds an impression that subsequent years have never effaced. I record this incident, because it shows how little Lady Byron assumed the privileges or had the character of an invalid absorbed in herself, and likely to brood over her own woes and wrongs.

Here was a family of strangers stranded in a dull season in London, and there was no manner of obligation upon her to exert herself to show them attention. Her state of health would have been an all-sufficient reason why she should not do it; and her doing it was simply a specimen of that unselfish care for others, even down to the least detail, of which her life was full.

A little while after, at her request, I went, with my husband and son, to pass an evening at her house.

There were a few persons present whom she thought I should be interested to know,--a Miss Goldsmid, daughter of Baron Goldsmid, and Lord Ockham, her grandson, eldest son and heir of the Earl of Lovelace, to whom she introduced my son.

I had heard much of the eccentricities of this young nobleman, and was exceedingly struck with his personal appearance. His bodily frame was of the order of the Farnese Hercules,--a wonderful development of physical and muscular strength. His hands were those of a blacksmith. He was broadly and squarely made, with a finely-shaped head, and dark eyes of surpassing brilliancy. I have seldom seen a more interesting combination than his whole appearance presented.

When all were engaged in talking, Lady Byron came and sat down by me, and glancing across to Lord Ockham and my son, who were talking together, she looked at me, and smiled. I immediately expressed my admiration of his fine eyes and the intellectual expression of his countenance, and my wonder at the uncommon muscular development of his frame.

She said that that of itself would account for many of Ockham's eccentricities. He had a body that required a more vigorous animal life than his station gave scope for, and this had often led him to seek it in what the world calls low society; that he had been to sea as a sailor, and was now working as a mechanic on the iron work of 'The Great Eastern.' He had laid aside his title, and went in daily with the other workmen, requesting them to call him simply Ockham.

I said that there was something to my mind very fine about this, even though it might show some want of proper balance.

She said he had noble traits, and that she felt assured he would yet

accomplish something worthy of himself. 'The great difficulty with our nobility is apt to be, that they do not understand the working-classes, so as to feel for them properly; and Ockham is now going through an experience which may yet fit him to do great good when he comes to the peerage. I am trying to influence him to do good among the workmen, and to interest himself in schools for their children. I think,' she added, 'I have great influence over Ockham,--the greater, perhaps, that I never make any claim to authority.'

This conversation is very characteristic of Lady Byron as showing her benevolent analysis of character, and the peculiar hopefulness she always had in regard to the future of every one brought in connection with her. Her moral hopefulness was something very singular; and in this respect she was so different from the rest of the world, that it would be difficult to make her understood. Her tolerance of wrong-doing would have seemed to many quite latitudinarian, and impressed them as if she had lost all just horror of what was morally wrong in transgression; but it seemed her fixed habit to see faults only as diseases and immaturities, and to expect them to fall away with time.

She saw the germs of good in what others regarded as only evil. She expected valuable results to come from what the world looked on only as eccentricities; {147} and she incessantly devoted herself to the task of guarding those whom the world condemned, and guiding them to those higher results of which she often thought that even their faults were prophetic.

Before I quit this sketch of Lady Byron as I knew her, I will give one

more of her letters. My return from that visit in Europe was met by the sudden death of the son mentioned in the foregoing account. At the time of this sorrow, Lady Byron was too unwell to write to me. The letter given alludes to this event, and speaks also of two coloured persons of remarkable talent, in whose career in England she had taken a deep interest. One of them is the 'friend' she speaks of.

'LONDON, Feb. 6, 1859.

DEAR MRS. STOWE,--I seem to feel our friend as a bridge, over which our broken outward communication can be renewed without effort. Why broken? The words I would have uttered at one time were like drops of blood from my heart. Now I sympathise with the calmness you have gained, and can speak of your loss as I do of my own. Loss and restoration are more and more linked in my mind, but "to the present live." As long as they are in God's world they are in ours. I ask no other consolation.

'Mrs. W---'s recovery has astonished me, and her husband's prospects give me great satisfaction. They have achieved a benefit to their coloured people. She had a mission which her burning soul has worked out, almost in defiance of death. But who is "called" without being "crucified," man or woman? I know of none.

'I fear that H. Martineau was too sanguine in her persuasion that the slave power had received a serious check from the ruin of so many of your Mammon-worshippers. With the return of commercial facilities,

that article of commerce will again find purchasers enough to raise its value. Not that way is the iniquity to be overthrown. A deeper moral earthquake is needed. {148} We English had ours in India; and though the cases are far from being alike, yet a consciousness of what we ought to have been and ought to be toward the natives could not have been awakened by less than the reddened waters of the Ganges. So I fear you will have to look on a day of judgment worse than has been painted.

'As to all the frauds and impositions which have been disclosed by the failures, what a want of the sense of personal responsibility they show. It seems to be thought that "association" will "cover a multitude of sins;" as if "and Co." could enter heaven. A firm may be described as a partnership for lowering the standard of morals. Even ecclesiastical bodies are not free from the "and Co.;" very different from "the goodly fellowship of the apostles."

'The better class of young gentlemen in England are seized with a mediaeval mania, to which Ruskin has contributed much. The chief reason for regretting it is that taste is made to supersede benevolence. The money that would save thousands from perishing or suffering must be applied to raise the Gothic edifice where their last prayer may be uttered. Charity may be dead, while Art has glorified her. This is worse than Catholicism, which cultivates heart and eye together. The first cathedral was Truth, at the beginning of the fourth century, just as Christianity was exchanging a heavenly for an earthly crown. True religion may have to cast away the symbol for the

spirit before "the kingdom" can come.

'While I am speculating to little purpose, perhaps you are doing--what? Might not a biography from your pen bring forth again some great, half-obscured soul to act on the world? Even Sir Philip Sidney ought to be superseded by a still nobler type.

'This must go immediately, to be in time for the bearer, of whose meeting with you I shall think as the friend of both. May it be happy!

'Your affectionate

'A. I. N. B.'

One letter more from Lady Byron I give,--the last I received from her:--

LONDON, May 3, 1859.

DEAR FRIEND,--I have found, particularly as to yourself, that, if I did not answer from the first impulse, all had evaporated. Your letter came by 'The Niagara,' which brought Fanny Kemble to learn the loss of her best friend, the Miss F---- whom you saw at my house.

'Her death, after an illness in which she was to the last a minister of good to others, is a soul-loss to me also; and your remarks are most appropriate to my feelings. I have been taught, however, to

accept survivorship; even to feel it, in some cases, Heaven's best blessing.

'I have an intense interest in your new novel. {149} More power in these few numbers than in any of your former writings, relating, at least, to my own mind. It would amuse you to hear my granddaughter and myself attempting to foresee the future of the love-story; being, for the moment, quite persuaded that James is at sea, and the minister about to ruin himself. We think that Mary will labour to be in love with the self-devoted man, under her mother's influence, and from that hyper-conscientiousness so common with good girls; but we don't wish her to succeed. Then what is to become of her older lover? Time will show.

'The lady you desired to introduce to me will be welcomed as of you. She has been misled with respect to my having any house in Yorkshire (New Leeds). I am in London now to be of a little use to A----; not ostensibly, for I can neither go out, nor give parties: but I am the confidential friend to whom she likes to bring her social gatherings, as she can see something of the world with others. Age and infirmity seem to be overlooked in what she calls the harmony between us,--not perfect agreement of opinion (which I should regret, with almost fifty years of difference), but the spirit-union: can you say what it is?

'I am interrupted by a note from Mrs. K----. She says that she cannot write of our lost friend yet, though she is less sad than she will be. Mrs. F---- may like to hear of her arrival, should you be in

communication with our friend. She is the type of youth in age.

'I often converse with Miss S----, a judicious friend of the W----s, about what is likely to await them. She would not succeed here as well as where she was a novelty. The character of our climate this year has been injurious to the respiratory organs; but I hope still to serve them.

'I have just missed Dale Owen, with whom I wished to have conversed on spiritualism. {150} Harris is lecturing here on religion. I do not hear him praised.

'People are looking for helps to believe, everywhere but in life,--in music, in architecture, in antiquity, in ceremony; and upon all these is written, "Thou shalt not believe." At least, if this be faith, happier the unbeliever. I am willing to see through that materialism; but, if I am to rest there, I would rend the veil.

'June 1.

'The day of the packet's sailing. I shall hope to be visited by you here. The best flowers sent me have been placed in your little vases, giving life to the remembrance of you, though not, like them, to pass away.

'Ever yours,

Shortly after, I was in England again, and had one more opportunity of resuming our personal intercourse. The first time that I called on Lady Byron, I saw her in one of those periods of utter physical exhaustion to which she was subject on account of the constant pressure of cares beyond her strength. All who knew her will testify, that, in a state of health which would lead most persons to become helpless absorbents of service from others, she was assuming burdens, and making outlays of her vital powers in acts of love and service, with a generosity that often reduced her to utter exhaustion. But none who knew or loved her ever misinterpreted the coldness of those seasons of exhaustion. We knew that it was not the spirit that was chilled, but only the frail mortal tabernacle. When I called on her at this time, she could not see me at first; and when, at last, she came, it was evident that she was in a state of utter prostration. Her hands were like ice; her face was deadly pale; and she conversed with a restraint and difficulty which showed what exertion it was for her to keep up at all. I left as soon as possible, with an appointment for another interview. That interview was my last on earth with her, and is still beautiful in memory. It was a long, still summer afternoon, spent alone with her in a garden, where we walked together. She was enjoying one of those bright intervals of freedom from pain and languor, in which her spirits always rose so buoyant and youthful; and her eye brightened, and her step became elastic.

One last little incident is cherished as most expressive of her. When it became time for me to leave, she took me in her carriage to the station.

As we were almost there, I missed my gloves, and said, 'I must have left them; but there is not time to go back.'

With one of those quick, impulsive motions which were so natural to her in doing a kindness, she drew off her own and said, 'Take mine if they will serve you.'

I hesitated a moment; and then the thought, that I might never see her again, came over me, and I said, 'Oh, yes! thanks.' That was the last earthly word of love between us. But, thank God, those who love worthily never meet for the last time: there is always a future.

CHAPTER II. LADY BYRON'S STORY AS TOLD ME.

I now come to the particulars of that most painful interview which has been the cause of all this controversy. My sister and myself were going from London to Eversley to visit the Rev. C. Kingsley. On our way, we stopped, by Lady Byron's invitation, to lunch with her at her summer residence on Ham Common, near Richmond; and it was then arranged, that on our return, we should make her a short visit, as she said she had a subject of importance on which she wished to converse with me alone.

On our return from Eversley, we arrived at her house in the morning.

It appeared to be one of Lady Byron's well days. She was up and dressed, and moved about her house with her usual air of quiet simplicity; as full of little acts of consideration for all about her as if they were the habitual invalids, and she the well person.

There were with her two ladies of her most intimate friends, by whom she seemed to be regarded with a sort of worship. When she left the room for a moment, they looked after her with a singular expression of respect and affection, and expressed freely their admiration of her character, and their fears that her unselfishness might be leading her to over-exertion.

After lunch, I retired with Lady Byron; and my sister remained with her friends. I should here remark, that the chief subject of the

conversation which ensued was not entirely new to me. In the interval between my first and second visits to England, a lady who for many years had enjoyed Lady Byron's friendship and confidence, had, with her consent, stated the case generally to me, giving some of the incidents: so that I was in a manner prepared for what followed.

Those who accuse Lady Byron of being a person fond of talking upon this subject, and apt to make unconsidered confidences, can have known very little of her, of her reserve, and of the apparent difficulty she had in speaking on subjects nearest her heart.

Her habitual calmness and composure of manner, her collected dignity on all occasions, are often mentioned by her husband, sometimes with bitterness, sometimes with admiration. He says, 'Though I accuse Lady Byron of an excess of self-respect, I must in candour admit that, if ever a person had excuse for an extraordinary portion of it, she has; as, in all her thoughts, words, and deeds, she is the most decorous woman that ever existed, and must appear, what few I fancy could, a perfectly refined gentlewoman, even to her femme de chambre.'

This calmness and dignity were never more manifested than in this interview. In recalling the conversation at this distance of time, I cannot remember all the language used. Some particular words and forms of expression I do remember, and those I give; and in other cases I give my recollection of the substance of what was said.

There was something awful to me in the intensity of repressed emotion

which she showed as she proceeded. The great fact upon which all turned was stated in words that were unmistakable:--

'He was guilty of incest with his sister!'

She here became so deathly pale, that I feared she would faint; and hastened to say, 'My dear friend, I have heard that.' She asked quickly, 'From whom?' and I answered, 'From Mrs. ----;' when she replied, 'Oh, yes!' as if recollecting herself.

I then asked her some questions; in reply to which she said, 'I will tell you.'

She then spoke of her first acquaintance with Lord Byron; from which I gathered that she, an only child, brought up in retirement, and living much within herself, had been, as deep natures often were, intensely stirred by his poetry; and had felt a deep interest in him personally, as one that had the germs of all that is glorious and noble.

When she was introduced to him, and perceived his admiration of herself, and at last received his offer, although deeply moved, she doubted her own power to be to him all that a wife should be. She declined his offer, therefore, but desired to retain his friendship. After this, as she said, a correspondence ensued, mostly on moral and literary subjects; and, by this correspondence, her interest in him was constantly increased.

At last, she said, he sent her a very beautiful letter, offering himself again. 'I thought,' she added, 'that it was sincere, and that I might now show him all I felt. I wrote just what was in my heart.

'Afterwards,' she said, 'I found in one of his journals this notice of my letter: "A letter from Bell,--never rains but it pours."'

There was through her habitual calm a shade of womanly indignation as she spoke these words; but it was gone in a moment. I said, 'And did he not love you, then?' She answered, 'No, my dear: he did not love me.'

'Why, then, did he wish to marry you?' She laid her hand on mine, and said in a low voice, 'You will see.'

She then told me, that, shortly after the declared engagement, he came to her father's house to visit her as an accepted suitor. The visit was to her full of disappointment. His appearance was so strange, moody, and unaccountable, and his treatment of her so peculiar, that she came to the conclusion that he did not love her, and sought an opportunity to converse with him alone.

She told him that she saw from his manner that their engagement did not give him pleasure; that she should never blame him if he wished to dissolve it; that his nature was exceptional; and if, on a nearer view of the situation, he shrank from it, she would release him, and remain no less than ever his friend.

Upon this, she said, he fainted entirely away.

She stopped a moment, and then, as if speaking with great effort, added, 'Then I was sure he must love me.'

'And did he not?' said I. 'What other cause could have led to this emotion?'

She looked at me very sadly, and said, 'Fear of detection.'

'What!' said I, 'did that cause then exist?'

'Yes,' she said, 'it did.' And she explained that she now attributed Lord Byron's great agitation to fear, that, in some way, suspicion of the crime had been aroused in her mind, and that on this account she was seeking to break the engagement. She said, that, from that moment, her sympathies were aroused for him, to soothe the remorse and anguish which seemed preying on his mind, and which she then regarded as the sensibility of an unusually exacting moral nature, which judged itself by higher standards, and condemned itself unsparingly for what most young men of his times regarded as venial faults. She had every hope for his future, and all the enthusiasm of belief that so many men and women of those times and ours have had in his intrinsic nobleness. She said the gloom, however, seemed to be even deeper when he came to the marriage; but she looked at it as the suffering of a peculiar being, to whom she was called to minister. I said to her, that, even in the days of my childhood, I had heard of something very painful that had passed as they

were in the carriage, immediately after marriage. She then said that it was so; that almost his first words, when they were alone, were, that she might once have saved him; that, if she had accepted him when he first offered, she might have made him anything she pleased; but that, as it was, she would find she had married a devil.

The conversation, as recorded in Lady Anne Barnard's Diary, seems only a continuation of the foregoing, and just what might have followed upon it.

I then asked how she became certain of the true cause.

She said, that, from the outset of their married life, his conduct towards her was strange and unaccountable, even during the first weeks after the wedding, while they were visiting her friends, and outwardly on good terms. He seemed resolved to shake and combat both her religious principles and her views of the family state. He tried to undermine her faith in Christianity as a rule of life by argument and by ridicule. He set before her the Continental idea of the liberty of marriage; it being a simple partnership of friendship and property, the parties to which were allowed by one another to pursue their own separate individual tastes. He told her, that, as he could not be expected to confine himself to her, neither should he expect or wish that she should confine herself to him; that she was young and pretty, and could have her lovers, and he should never object; and that she must allow him the same freedom.

She said that she did not comprehend to what this was tending till after they came to London, and his sister came to stay with them.

At what precise time the idea of an improper connection between her husband and his sister was first forced upon her, she did not say; but she told me how it was done. She said that one night, in her presence, he treated his sister with a liberty which both shocked and astonished her. Seeing her amazement and alarm, he came up to her, and said, in a sneering tone, 'I suppose you perceive you are not wanted here. Go to your own room, and leave us alone. We can amuse ourselves better without you.'

She said, 'I went to my room, trembling. I fell down on my knees, and prayed to my heavenly Father to have mercy on them. I thought, "What shall I do?"'

I remember, after this, a pause in the conversation, during which she seemed struggling with thoughts and emotions; and, for my part, I was unable to utter a word, or ask a question.

She did not tell me what followed immediately upon this, nor how soon after she spoke on the subject with either of the parties. She first began to speak of conversations afterwards held with Lord Byron, in which he boldly avowed the connection as having existed in time past, and as one that was to continue in time to come; and implied that she must submit to it. She put it to his conscience as concerning his sister's soul, and he said that it was no sin, that it was the way the world was first peopled: the Scriptures taught that all the world descended from one pair; and how could that be unless brothers married their sisters?

that, if not a sin then, it could not be a sin now.

I immediately said, 'Why, Lady Byron, those are the very arguments given in the drama of "Cain."'

'The very same,' was her reply. 'He could reason very speciously on this subject.' She went on to say, that, when she pressed him hard with the universal sentiment of mankind as to the horror and the crime, he took another turn, and said that the horror and crime were the very attraction; that he had worn out all ordinary forms of sin, and that he 'longed for the stimulus of a new kind of vice.' She set before him the dread of detection; and then he became furious. She should never be the means of his detection, he said. She should leave him; that he was resolved upon: but she should always bear all the blame of the separation. In the sneering tone which was common with him, he said, 'The world will believe me, and it will not believe you. The world has made up its mind that "By" is a glorious boy; and the world will go for "By," right or wrong. Besides, I shall make it my life's object to discredit you: I shall use all my powers. Read "Caleb Williams," {161} and you will see that I shall do by you just as Falkland did by Caleb.'

I said that all this seemed to me like insanity. She said that she was for a time led to think that it was insanity, and excused and pitied him; that his treatment of her expressed such hatred and malignity, that she knew not what else to think of it; that he seemed resolved to drive her out of the house at all hazards, and threatened her, if she should remain, in a way to alarm the heart of any woman: yet, thinking him

insane, she left him at last with the sorrow with which anyone might leave a dear friend whose reason was wholly overthrown, and to whom in this desolation she was no longer permitted to minister.

I inquired in one of the pauses of the conversation whether Mrs. Leigh was a peculiarly beautiful or attractive woman.

'No, my dear: she was plain.'

'Was she, then, distinguished for genius or talent of any kind?'

'Oh, no! Poor woman! she was weak, relatively to him, and wholly under his control.'

'And what became of her?' I said.

'She afterwards repented, and became a truly good woman.' I think it was here she mentioned that she had frequently seen and conversed with Mrs. Leigh in the latter part of her life; and she seemed to derive comfort from the recollection.

I asked, 'Was there a child?' I had been told by Mrs. ---- that there was a daughter, who had lived some years.

She said there was one, a daughter, who made her friends much trouble, being of a very difficult nature to manage. I had understood that at one time this daughter escaped from her friends to the Continent, and that

Lady Byron assisted in efforts to recover her. Of Lady Byron's kindness both to Mrs. Leigh and the child, I had before heard from Mrs. ----, who gave me my first information.

It is also strongly impressed on my mind, that Lady Byron, in answer to some question of mine as to whether there was ever any meeting between Lord Byron and his sister after he left England, answered, that she had insisted upon it, or made it a condition, that Mrs. Leigh should not go abroad to him.

When the conversation as to events was over, as I stood musing, I said, 'Have you no evidence that he repented?' and alluded to the mystery of his death, and the message be endeavoured to utter.

She answered quickly, and with great decision, that whatever might have been his meaning at that hour, she felt sure he had finally repented; and added with great earnestness, 'I do not believe that any child of the heavenly Father is ever left to eternal sin.'

I said that such a hope was most delightful to my feelings, but that I had always regarded the indulgence of it as a dangerous one.

Her look, voice, and manner, at that moment, are indelibly fixed in my mind. She looked at me so sadly, so firmly, and said,--

'Danger, Mrs. Stowe! What danger can come from indulging that hope, like the danger that comes from not having it?'

I said in my turn, 'What danger comes from not having it?'

'The danger of losing all faith in God,' she said, 'all hope for others, all strength to try and save them. I once knew a lady,' she added, 'who was in a state of scepticism and despair from belief in that doctrine. I think I saved her by giving her my faith.'

I was silent; and she continued: 'Lord Byron believed in eternal punishment fully: for though he reasoned against Christianity as it is commonly received, he could not reason himself out of it; and I think it made him desperate. He used to say, "The worst of it is I do believe." Had he seen God as I see him, I am sure his heart would have relented.'

She went on to say, that his sins, great as they were, admitted of much palliation and excuse; that he was the child of singular and ill-matched parents; that he had an organisation originally fine, but one capable equally of great good or great evil; that in his childhood he had only the worst and most fatal influences; that he grew up into manhood with no guide; that there was everything in the classical course of the schools to develop an unhealthy growth of passion, and no moral influence of any kind to restrain it; that the manners of his day were corrupt; that what were now considered vices in society were then spoken of as matters of course among young noblemen; that drinking, gaming, and licentiousness everywhere abounded and that, up to a certain time, he was no worse than multitudes of other young men of his day,--only that the vices of his day were worse for him. The excesses of passion, the disregard of physical

laws in eating, drinking, and living, wrought effects on him that they did not on less sensitively organised frames, and prepared him for the evil hour when he fell into the sin which shaded his whole life. All the rest was a struggle with its consequences,--sinning more and more to conceal the sin of the past. But she believed he never outlived remorse; that he always suffered; and that this showed that God had not utterly forsaken him. Remorse, she said, always showed moral sensibility, and, while that remained, there was always hope.

She now began to speak of her grounds for thinking it might be her duty fully to publish this story before she left the world.

First she said that, through the whole course of her life, she had felt the eternal value of truth, and seen how dreadful a thing was falsehood, and how fearful it was to be an accomplice in it, even by silence. Lord Byron had demoralised the moral sense of England, and he had done it in a great degree by the sympathy excited by falsehood. This had been pleaded in extenuation of all his crimes and vices, and led to a lowering of the standard of morals in the literary world. Now it was proposed to print cheap editions of his works, and sell them among the common people, and interest them in him by the circulation of this same story.

She then said in effect, that she believed in retribution and suffering in the future life, and that the consequences of sins here follow us there; and it was strongly impressed upon her mind that Lord Byron must suffer in looking on the evil consequences of what he had done in this life, and in seeing the further extension of that evil.

'It has sometimes strongly appeared to me,' she said, 'that he cannot be at peace until this injustice has been righted. Such is the strong feeling that I have when I think of going where he is.'

These things, she said, had led her to inquire whether it might not be her duty to make a full and clear disclosure before she left the world.

Of course, I did not listen to this story as one who was investigating its worth. I received it as truth. And the purpose for which it was communicated was not to enable me to prove it to the world, but to ask my opinion whether she should show it to the world before leaving it. The whole consultation was upon the assumption that she had at her command such proofs as could not be questioned.

Concerning what they were I did not minutely inquire: only, in answer to a general question, she said that she had letters and documents in proof of her story. Knowing Lady Byron's strength of mind, her clear-headedness, her accurate habits, and her perfect knowledge of the matter, I considered her judgment on this point decisive.

I told her that I would take the subject into consideration, and give my opinion in a few days. That night, after my sister and myself had retired to our own apartment, I related to her the whole history, and we spent the night in talking of it. I was powerfully impressed with the justice and propriety of an immediate disclosure; while she, on the contrary, represented the painful consequences that would probably come

upon Lady Byron from taking such a step.

Before we parted the next day, I requested Lady Byron to give me some memoranda of such dates and outlines of the general story as would enable me better to keep it in its connection; which she did.

On giving me the paper, Lady Byron requested me to return it to her when it had ceased to be of use to me for the purpose indicated.

Accordingly, a day or two after, I enclosed it to her in a hasty note, as I was then leaving London for Paris, and had not yet had time fully to consider the subject.

On reviewing my note, I can recall that then the whole history appeared to me like one of those singular cases where unnatural impulses to vice are the result of a taint of constitutional insanity. This has always seemed to me the only way of accounting for instances of utterly motiveless and abnormal wickedness and cruelty. These my first impressions were expressed in the hasty note written at the time:--

'LONDON, Nov. 5, 1856.

'DEAREST FRIEND,--I return these. They have held mine eyes waking! How strange! how unaccountable! Have you ever subjected the facts to the judgment of a medical man learned in nervous pathology?

'Is it not insanity?

"Great wits to madness nearly are allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide."

'But my purpose to-night is not to write you fully what I think of this matter. I am going to write to you from Paris more at leisure.'

The rest of the letter was taken up in the final details of a charity in which Lady Byron had been engaged with me in assisting an unfortunate artist. It concludes thus:--

'I write now in all haste, en route for Paris. As to America, all is not lost yet. {168} Farewell! I love you, my dear friend, as never before, with an intense feeling I cannot easily express. God bless you!

'H. B. S.'

The next letter is as follows:--

'Paris, Dec. 17, 1856.

'DEAR LADY BYRON,--The Kansas Committee have written me a letter desiring me to express to Miss ---- their gratitude for the five pounds she sent them. I am not personally acquainted with her, and must return these acknowledgments through you.

'I wrote you a day or two since, enclosing the reply of the Kansas Committee to you.

'On that subject on which you spoke to me the last time we were together, I have thought often and deeply.

'I have changed my mind somewhat. Considering the peculiar circumstances of the case, I could wish that the sacred veil of silence, so bravely thrown over the past, should never be withdrawn during the time that you remain with us.

'I would say, then, Leave all with some discreet friends, who, after both have passed from earth, shall say what was due to justice.

'I am led to think this by seeing how low, how unjust, how unworthy, the judgments of this world are; and I would not that what I so much respect, love, and revere should be placed within reach of its harpy claw, which pollutes what it touches.

'The day will yet come which will bring to light every hidden thing. "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known;" and so justice will not fail.

'Such, my dear friend, are my thoughts; different from what they were since first I heard that strange, sad history. Meanwhile, I love you ever, whether we meet again on earth or not.

'Affectionately yours,

'H. B. S.'

The following letter will here be inserted as confirming a part of Lady Byron's story:--

TO THE EDITOR OF 'MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINE.'

'SIR,--I trust that you will hold me excused from any desire to be troublesome, or to rush into print. Both these things are far from my wish. But the publication of a book having for its object the vindication of Lord Byron's character, and the subsequent appearance in your magazine of Mrs. Stowe's article in defence of Lady Byron, having led to so much controversy in the various newspapers of the day, I feel constrained to put in a few words among the rest.

'My father was intimately acquainted with Lady Byron's family for many years, both before and after her marriage; being, in fact, steward to Sir Ralph Milbanke at Seaham, where the marriage took place; and, from all my recollections of what he told me of the affair (and he used often to talk of it, up to the time of his death, eight years ago), I fully agree with Mrs. Stowe's view of the case, and desire to add my humble testimony to the truth of what she has stated.

'Whilst Byron was staying at Seaham, previous to his marriage, he spent most of his time pistol-shooting in the plantations adjoining

the hall, often making use of his glove as a mark; his servant being with him to load for him.

'When all was in readiness for the wedding-ceremony (which took place in the drawing-room of the hall), Byron had to be sought for in the grounds, where he was walking in his usual surly mood.

'After the marriage, they posted to Halnaby Lodge in Yorkshire, a distance of about forty miles; to which place my father accompanied them, and he always spoke strongly of Lady Byron's apparent distress during and at the end of the journey.

'The insulting words mentioned by Mrs. Stowe were spoken by Byron before leaving the park at Seaham; after which he appeared to sit in moody silence, reading a book, for the rest of the journey. At Halnaby, a number of persons, tenants and others, were met to cheer them on their arrival. Of these he took not the slightest notice, but jumped out of the carriage, and walked away, leaving his bride to alight by herself. She shook hands with my father, and begged that he would see that some refreshment was supplied to those who had thus come to welcome them.

'I have in my possession several letters (which I should be glad to show to anyone interested in the matter) both from Lady Byron, and her mother, Lady Milbanke, to my father, all showing the deep and kind interest which they took in the welfare of all connected with them, and directing the distribution of various charities, etc. Pensions

were allowed both to the old servants of the Milbankes and to several poor persons in the village and neighbourhood for the rest of their lives; and Lady Byron never ceased to take a lively interest in all that concerned them.

'I desire to tender my humble thanks to Mrs. Stowe for having come forward in defence of one whose character has been much misrepresented; and to you, sir, for having published the same in your pages.

'I have the honour to be, sir, yours obediently,

'G. H. AIRD.

'DAOURTY, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, Sept. 29, 1869.'

CHAPTER III. CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF EVENTS.

I have now fulfilled as conscientiously as possible the requests of those who feel that they have a right to know exactly what was said in this interview.

It has been my object, in doing this, to place myself just where I should stand were I giving evidence under oath before a legal tribunal. In my first published account, there were given some smaller details of the story, of no particular value to the main purpose of it, which I received not from Lady Byron, but from her confidential friend. One of these was the account of her seeing Lord Byron's favourite spaniel lying at his door, and the other was the scene of the parting.

The first was communicated to me before I ever saw Lady Byron, and under these circumstances:--I was invited to meet her, and had expressed my desire to do so, because Lord Byron had been all my life an object of great interest to me. I inquired what sort of a person Lady Byron was. My friend spoke of her with enthusiasm. I then said, 'but of course she never loved Lord Byron, or she would not have left him.' The lady answered, 'I can show you with what feelings she left him by relating this story;' and then followed the anecdote.

Subsequently, she also related to me the other story of the parting-scene between Lord and Lady Byron. In regard to these two incidents, my

recollection is clear.

It will be observed by the reader that Lady Byron's conversation with me was simply for consultation on one point, and that point whether she herself should publish the story before her death. It was not, therefore, a complete history of all the events in their order, but specimens of a few incidents and facts. Her object was, not to prove her story to me, nor to put me in possession of it with a view to my proving it, but simply and briefly to show me what it was, that I might judge as to the probable results of its publication at that time.

It therefore comprised primarily these points:--

1. An exact statement, in so many words, of the crime.

2. A statement of the manner in which it was first forced on her attention by Lord Byron's words and actions, including his admissions and defences of it.

3. The admission of a period when she had ascribed his whole conduct to insanity.

4. A reference to later positive evidences of guilt, the existence of a child, and Mrs. Leigh's subsequent repentance.

And here I have a word to say in reference to the alleged inaccuracies of my true story.

The dates that Lady Byron gave me on the memoranda did not relate either to the time of the first disclosure, or the period when her doubts became certainties; nor did her conversation touch either of these points: and, on a careful review of the latter, I see clearly that it omitted dwelling upon anything which I might be supposed to have learned from her already published statement.

I re-enclosed that paper to her from London, and have never seen it since.

In writing my account, which I designed to do in the most general terms, I took for my guide Miss Martineau's published Memoir of Lady Byron, which has long stood uncontradicted before the public, of which Macmillan's London edition is now before me. The reader is referred to page 316, which reads thus:--

'She was born 1792; married in January 1814; returned to her father's house in 1816; died on May 16, 1860.' This makes her married life two years; but we need not say that the date is inaccurate, as Lady Byron was married in 1815.

Supposing Lady Byron's married life to have covered two years, I could only reconcile its continuance for that length of time to her uncertainty as to his sanity; to deceptions practised on her, making her doubt at one time, and believe at another; and his keeping her in a general state of turmoil and confusion, till at last he took the step of banishing her.

Various other points taken from Miss Martineau have also been attacked as inaccuracies; for example, the number of executions in the house: but these points, though of no importance, are substantially borne out by Moore's statements.

This controversy, unfortunately, cannot be managed with the accuracy of a legal trial. Its course, hitherto, has rather resembled the course of a drawing-room scandal, where everyone freely throws in an assertion, with or without proof. In making out my narrative, however, I shall use only certain authentic sources, some of which have for a long time been before the public, and some of which have floated up from the waves of the recent controversy. I consider as authentic sources,--

Moore's Life of Byron;

Lady Byron's own account of the separation, published in 1830;

Lady Byron's statements to me in 1856;

Lord Lindsay's communication, giving an extract from Lady Anne Barnard's diary, and a copy of a letter from Lady Byron dated 1818, about three years after her marriage;

Mrs. Mimms' testimony, as given in a daily paper published at Newcastle, England;

And Lady Byron's letters, as given recently in the late 'London Quarterly.'

All which documents appear to arrange themselves into a connected series.

From these, then, let us construct the story.

According to Mrs. Mimms' account, which is likely to be accurate, the time spent by Lord and Lady Byron in bridal-visiting was three weeks at Halnaby Hall, and six weeks at Seaham, when Mrs. Mimms quitted their service.

During this first period of three weeks, Lord Byron's treatment of his wife, as testified to by the servant, was such that she advised her young mistress to return to her parents; and, at one time, Lady Byron had almost resolved to do so.

What the particulars of his conduct were, the servant refuses to state; being bound by a promise of silence to her mistress. She, however, testifies to a warm friendship existing between Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh, in a manner which would lead us to feel that Lady Byron received and was received by Lord Byron's sister with the greatest affection. Lady Byron herself says to Lady Anne Barnard, 'I had heard that he was the best of brothers;' and the inference is, that she, at an early period of her married life, felt the greatest confidence in his sister, and wished to have her with them as much as possible. In Lady Anne's account, this wish to have the sister with her was increased by Lady Byron's distress

at her husband's attempts to corrupt her principles with regard to religion and marriage.

In Moore's Life, vol. iii., letter 217, Lord Byron writes from Seaham to Moore, under date of March 8, sending a copy of his verses in Lady Byron's handwriting, and saying, 'We shall leave this place to-morrow, and shall stop on our way to town, in the interval of taking a house there, at Colonel Leigh's, near Newmarket, where any epistle of yours will find its welcome way. I have been very comfortable here, listening to that d---d monologue which elderly gentlemen call conversation, in which my pious father-in-law repeats himself every evening, save one, when he played upon the fiddle. However, they have been vastly kind and hospitable, and I like them and the place vastly; and I hope they will live many happy months. Bell is in health and unvaried good-humour and behaviour; but we are in all the agonies of packing and parting.'

Nine days after this, under date of March 17, Lord Byron says, 'We mean to metropolize to-morrow, and you will address your next to Piccadilly.' The inference is, that the days intermediate were spent at Colonel Leigh's. The next letters, and all subsequent ones for six months, are dated from Piccadilly.

As we have shown, there is every reason to believe that a warm friendship had thus arisen between Mrs. Leigh and Lady Byron, and that, during all this time, Lady Byron desired as much of the society of her sister-in-law as possible. She was a married woman and a mother, her husband's nearest relative; and Lady Byron could with more propriety ask, from her, counsel

or aid in respect to his peculiarities than she could from her own parents. If we consider the character of Lady Byron as given by Mrs. Mimms, that of a young person of warm but repressed feeling, without sister or brother, longing for human sympathy, and having so far found no relief but in talking with a faithful dependant,--we may easily see that the acquisition of a sister through Lord Byron might have been all in all to her, and that the feelings which he checked and rejected for himself might have flowed out towards his sister with enthusiasm. The date of Mrs. Leigh's visit does not appear.

The first domestic indication in Lord Byron's letters from London is the announcement of the death of Lady Byron's uncle, Lord Wentworth, from whom came large expectations of property. Lord Byron had mentioned him before in his letters as so kind to Bell and himself that he could not find it in his heart to wish him in heaven if he preferred staying here. In his letter of April 23, he mentions going to the play immediately after hearing this news, 'although,' as he says, 'he ought to have stayed at home in sackcloth for "unc."'

On June 12, he writes that Lady Byron is more than three months advanced in her progress towards maternity; and that they have been out very little, as he wishes to keep her quiet. We are informed by Moore that Lord Byron was at this time a member of the Drury-Lane Theatre Committee; and that, in this unlucky connection, one of the fatalities of the first year of trial as a husband lay. From the strain of Byron's letters, as given in Moore, it is apparent, that, while he thinks it best for his wife to remain at home, he does not propose to share the retirement, but

prefers running his own separate career with such persons as thronged the greenroom of the theatre in those days.

In commenting on Lord Byron's course, we must not by any means be supposed to indicate that he was doing any more or worse than most gay young men of his time. The licence of the day as to getting drunk at dinner-parties, and leading, generally, what would, in these days, be called a disorderly life, was great. We should infer that none of the literary men of Byron's time would have been ashamed of being drunk occasionally. The Noctes Ambrosianae Club of 'Blackwood' is full of songs glorying, in the broadest terms, in out-and-out drunkenness, and inviting to it as the highest condition of a civilised being. {178a}

But drunkenness upon Lord Byron had a peculiar and specific effect, which he notices afterwards, in his Journal, at Venice: 'The effect of all wines and spirits upon me is, however, strange. It settles, but makes me gloomy--gloomy at the very moment of their effect: it composes, however, though sullenly.' {178b} And, again, in another place, he says, 'Wine and spirits make me sullen, and savage to ferocity.'

It is well known that the effects of alcoholic excitement are various as the natures of the subjects. But by far the worst effects, and the most destructive to domestic peace, are those that occur in cases where spirits, instead of acting on the nerves of motion, and depriving the subject of power in that direction, stimulate the brain so as to produce there the ferocity, the steadiness, the utter deadness to compassion or conscience, which characterise a madman. How fearful to a sensitive

young mother in the period of pregnancy might be the return of such a madman to the domestic roof! Nor can we account for those scenes described in Lady Anne Barnard's letters, where Lord Byron returned from his evening parties to try torturing experiments on his wife, otherwise than by his own statement, that spirits, while they steadied him, made him 'gloomy, and savage to ferocity.'

Take for example this:--

> 'One night, coming home from one of his lawless parties, he saw me (Lady B.) so indignantly collected, and bearing all with such a determined calmness, that a rush of remorse seemed to come over him. He called himself a monster, and, though his sister was present, threw himself in agony at my feet. "I could not, no, I could not, forgive him such injuries! He had lost me forever!" Astonished at this return to virtue, my tears, I believe, flowed over his face; and I said, "Byron, all is forgotten; never, never shall you hear of it more."
>
> 'He started up, and folding his arms while he looked at me, burst out into laughter. "What do you mean?" said I. "Only a philosophical experiment; that's all," said he. "I wished to ascertain the value of your resolutions."'

To ascribe such deliberate cruelty as this to the effect of drink upon Lord Byron, is the most charitable construction that can be put upon his conduct.

Yet the manners of the period were such, that Lord Byron must have often come to this condition while only doing what many of his acquaintances did freely, and without fear of consequences.

Mr. Moore, with his usual artlessness, gives us an idea of a private supper between himself and Lord Byron. We give it, with our own italics, as a specimen of many others:--

'Having taken upon me to order the repast, and knowing that Lord Byron for the last two days had done nothing towards sustenance beyond eating a few biscuits and (to appease appetite) chewing mastic, I desired that we should have a good supply of at least two kinds of fish. My companion, however, confined himself to lobsters; and of these finished two or three, to his own share, interposing, sometimes, a small liqueur-glass of strong white brandy, sometimes a tumbler of very hot water, and then pure brandy again, to the amount of near half a dozen small glasses of the latter, without which, alternately with the hot water, he appeared to think the lobster could not be digested. After this, we had claret, of which, having despatched two bottles between us, at about four o'clock in the morning we parted.

'As Pope has thought his "delicious lobster-nights" worth commemorating, these particulars of one in which Lord Byron was concerned may also have some interest.

'Among other nights of the same description which I had the happiness

of passing with him, I remember once, in returning home from some assembly at rather a late hour, we saw lights in the windows of his old haunt, Stevens's in Bond Street, and agreed to stop there and sup. On entering, we found an old friend of his, Sir G---- W----, who joined our party; and, the lobsters and brandy and water being put in requisition, it was (as usual on such occasions) broad daylight before we separated.'--Vol. iii. p.83.

During the latter part of Lady Byron's pregnancy, it appears from Moore that Byron was, night after night, engaged out at dinner parties, in which getting drunk was considered as of course the finale, as appears from the following letters:--

(LETTER 228.)

TO MR. MOORE.

'TERRACE, PICCADILLY, OCT. 31,1815.

'I have not been able to ascertain precisely the time of duration of the stock-market; but I believe it is a good time for selling out, and I hope so. First, because I shall see you; and, next, because I shall receive certain moneys on behalf of Lady B., the which will materially conduce to my comfort; I wanting (as the duns say) "to make up a sum."

'Yesterday I dined out with a large-ish party, where were Sheridan and Colman, Harry Harris, of C. G., and his brother, Sir Gilbert

Heathcote, Ds. Kinnaird, and others of note and notoriety. Like other parties of the kind, it was first silent, then talky, then argumentative, then disputatious, then unintelligible, * then altogethery, then inarticulate, and then drunk. When we had reached the last step of this glorious ladder, it was difficult to get down again without stumbling; and, to crown all, Kinnaird and I had to conduct Sheridan down a d---d corkscrew staircase, which had certainly been constructed before the discovery of fermented liquors, and to which no legs, however crooked, could possibly accommodate themselves. We deposited him safe at home, where his man, evidently used to the business, {181} waited to receive him in the hall.

'Both he and Colman were, as usual, very good; but I carried away much wine, and the wine had previously carried away my memory: so that all was hiccough and happiness for the last hour or so, and I am not impregnated with any of the conversation. Perhaps you heard of a late answer of Sheridan to the watchman who found him bereft of that "divine particle of air" called reason . . . He (the watchman) found Sherry in the street fuddled and bewildered, and almost insensible. "Who are you, sir?"--No answer. "What's your name?"--A hiccough. "What's your name?"--Answer, in a slow, deliberate, and impassive tone, "Wilberforce!" Is not that Sherry all over?--and, to my mind, excellent. Poor fellow, his very dregs are better than the "first sprightly runnings" of others.

'My paper is full, and I have a grievous headache.

'P.S.--Lady B. is in full progress. Next month will bring to light (with the aid of "Juno Lucina, fer opem," or rather opes, for the last are most wanted) the tenth wonder of the world; Gil Blas being the eighth, and he (my son's father) the ninth.'

Here we have a picture of the whole story,--Lady Byron within a month of her confinement; her money being used to settle debts; her husband out at a dinner-party, going through the usual course of such parties, able to keep his legs and help Sheridan downstairs, and going home 'gloomy, and savage to ferocity,' to his wife.

Four days after this (letter 229), we find that this dinner-party is not an exceptional one, but one of a series: for he says, 'To-day I dine with Kinnaird,--we are to have Sheridan and Colman again; and to-morrow, once more, at Sir Gilbert Heathcote's.'

Afterward, in Venice, he reviews the state of his health, at this period in London; and his account shows that his excesses in the vices of his times had wrought effects on his sensitive, nervous organisation, very different from what they might on the more phlegmatic constitutions of ordinary Englishmen. In his journal, dated Venice, Feb. 2, 1821, he says,--

'I have been considering what can be the reason why I always wake at a certain hour in the morning, and always in very bad spirits,--I may say, in actual despair and despondency, in all respects, even of that which pleased me over night. In about an hour or two this goes off,

and I compose either to sleep again, or at least to quiet. In England, five years ago, I had the same kind of hypochondria, but accompanied with so violent a thirst, that I have drunk as many as fifteen bottles of soda-water in one night, after going to bed, and been still thirsty,--calculating, however, some lost from the bursting-out and effervescence and overflowing of the soda-water in drawing the corks, or striking off the necks of the bottles from mere thirsty impatience. At present, I have not the thirst; but the depression of spirits is no less violent.'--Vol. v. p.96.

These extracts go to show what must have been the condition of the man whom Lady Byron was called to receive at the intervals when he came back from his various social excitements and pleasures. That his nerves were exacerbated by violent extremes of abstinence and reckless indulgence; that he was often day after day drunk, and that drunkenness made him savage and ferocious,--such are the facts clearly shown by Mr. Moore's narrative. Of the natural peculiarities of Lord Byron's temper, he thus speaks to the Countess of Blessington:--

'I often think that I inherit my violence and bad temper from my poor mother, not that my father, from all I could ever learn, had a much better; so that it is no wonder I have such a very bad one. As long as I can remember anything, I recollect being subject to violent paroxysms of rage, so disproportioned to the cause as to surprise me when they were over; and this still continues. I cannot coolly view any thing which excites my feelings; and, once the lurking devil in me is roused, I lose all command of myself. I do not recover a good fit

of rage for days after. Mind, I do not by this mean that the ill humour continues, as, on the contrary, that quickly subsides, exhausted by its own violence; but it shakes me terribly, and leaves me low and nervous after.'--Lady Blessington's Conversations, p.142.

That during this time also his irritation and ill temper were increased by the mortification of duns, debts, and executions, is on the face of Moore's story. Moore himself relates one incident, which gives some idea of the many which may have occurred at these times, in a note on p.215, vol. iv., where he speaks of Lord Byron's destroying a favourite old watch that had been his companion from boyhood, and gone with him to Greece. 'In a fit of vexation and rage, brought upon him by some of these humiliating embarrassments, to which he was now almost daily a prey, he furiously dashed this watch on the hearth, and ground it to pieces with the poker among the ashes.'

It is no wonder, that, with a man of this kind to manage, Lady Byron should have clung to the only female companionship she could dare to trust in the case, and earnestly desired to retain with her the sister, who seemed, more than herself, to have influence over him.

The first letter given by 'The Quarterly,' from Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh, without a date, evidently belongs to this period, when the sister's society presented itself as a refuge in her approaching confinement. Mrs Leigh speaks of leaving. The young wife, conscious that the house presents no attractions, and that soon she herself shall be laid by, cannot urge Mrs. Leigh's stay as likely to give her any pleasure, but

only as a comfort to herself.

'You will think me very foolish; but I have tried two or three times, and cannot talk to you of your departure with a decent visage: so let me say one word in this way to spare my philosophy. With the expectations which I have, I never will nor can ask you to stay one moment longer than you are inclined to do. It would [be] the worst return for all I ever received from you. But in this at least I am "truth itself," when I say, that whatever the situation may be, there is no one whose society is dearer to me, or can contribute more to my happiness. These feelings will not change under any circumstances, and I should be grieved if you did not understand them. Should you hereafter condemn me, I shall not love you less. I will say no more. Judge for yourself about going or staying. I wish you to consider yourself, if you could be wise enough to do that, for the first time in your life.

'Thine,

'A. I. B.'

Addressed on the cover, 'To The Hon. Mrs. Leigh.'

This letter not being dated, we have no clue but what we obtain from its own internal evidence. It certainly is not written in Lady Byron's usual clear and elegant style; and is, in this respect, in striking contrast to all her letters that I have ever seen.

But the notes written by a young woman under such peculiar and distressing circumstances must not be judged by the standard of calmer hours.

Subsequently to this letter, and during that stormy, irrational period when Lord Byron's conduct became daily more and more unaccountable, may have come that startling scene in which Lord Byron took every pains to convince his wife of improper relations subsisting between himself and his sister.

What an utter desolation this must have been to the wife, tearing from her the last hold of friendship, and the last refuge to which she had clung in her sorrows, may easily be conceived.

In this crisis, it appears that the sister convinced Lady Byron that the whole was to be attributed to insanity. It would be a conviction gladly accepted, and bringing infinite relief, although still surrounding her path with fearful difficulties.

That such was the case is plainly asserted by Lady Byron in her statement published in 1830. Speaking of her separation, Lady Byron says:--

> 'The facts are, I left London for Kirkby Mallory, the residence of my father and mother, on the 15th of January, 1816. Lord Byron had signified to me in writing, Jan. 6, his absolute desire that I should leave London on the earliest day that I could conveniently fix. It

was not safe for me to encounter the fatigues of a journey sooner than the 15th. Previously to my departure, it had been strongly impressed on my mind that Lord Byron was under the influence of insanity.

'This opinion was in a great measure derived from the communications made to me by his nearest relatives and personal attendant'

Now there was no nearer relative than Mrs. Leigh; and the personal attendant was Fletcher. It was therefore presumably Mrs. Leigh who convinced Lady Byron of her husband's insanity.

Lady Byron says, 'It was even represented to me that he was in danger of destroying himself.

'With the concurrence of his family, I had consulted with Dr. Baillie, as a friend, on Jan. 8, as to his supposed malady.' Now, Lord Byron's written order for her to leave came on Jan. 6. It appears, then, that Lady Byron, acting in concurrence with Mrs. Leigh and others of her husband's family, consulted Dr. Baillie, on Jan. 8, as to what she should do; the symptoms presented to Dr. Baillie being, evidently, insane hatred of his wife on the part of Lord Byron, and a determination to get her out of the house. Lady Byron goes on:--

'On acquainting him with the state of the case, and with Lord Byron's desire that I should leave London, Dr. Baillie thought my absence might be advisable as an experiment, assuming the fact of mental derangement; for Dr. Baillie, not having had access to Lord Byron,

could not pronounce an opinion on that point. He enjoined, that, in correspondence with Lord Byron, I should avoid all but light and soothing topics. Under these impressions, I left London, determined to follow the advice given me by Dr. Baillie. Whatever might have been the nature of Lord Byron's treatment of me from the time of my marriage, yet, supposing him to have been in a state of mental alienation, it was not for me, nor for any person of common humanity, to manifest at that moment a sense of injury.'

It appears, then, that the domestic situation in Byron's house at the time of his wife's expulsion was one so grave as to call for family counsel; for Lady Byron, generally accurate, speaks in the plural number. 'His nearest relatives' certainly includes Mrs. Leigh. 'His family' includes more. That some of Lord Byron's own relatives were cognisant of facts at this time, and that they took Lady Byron's side, is shown by one of his own chance admissions. In vol. vi. p.394, in a letter on Bowles, he says, speaking of this time, 'All my relations, save one, fell from me like leaves from a tree in autumn.' And in Medwin's Conversations he says, 'Even my cousin George Byron, who had been brought up with me, and whom I loved as a brother, took my wife's part.' The conduct must have been marked in the extreme that led to this result.

We cannot help stopping here to say that Lady Byron's situation at this time has been discussed in our days with a want of ordinary human feeling that is surprising. Let any father and mother, reading this, look on their own daughter, and try to make the case their own.

After a few short months of married life,--months full of patient endurance of the strangest and most unaccountable treatment,--she comes to them, expelled from her husband's house, an object of hatred and aversion to him, and having to settle for herself the awful question, whether he is a dangerous madman or a determined villain.

Such was this young wife's situation.

With a heart at times wrung with compassion for her husband as a helpless maniac, and fearful that all may end in suicide, yet compelled to leave him, she writes on the road the much-quoted letter, beginning 'Dear Duck.' This is an exaggerated and unnatural letter, it is true, but of precisely the character that might be expected from an inexperienced young wife when dealing with a husband supposed to be insane.

The next day, she addressed to Augusta this letter:--

> 'MY DEAREST A.,--It is my great comfort that you are still in Piccadilly.'

And again, on the 23rd:--

> 'DEAREST A.,--I know you feel for me, as I do for you; and perhaps I am better understood than I think. You have been, ever since I knew you, my best comforter; and will so remain, unless you grow tired of the office,--which may well be.'

We can see here how self-denying and heroic appears to Lady Byron the conduct of the sister, who patiently remains to soothe and guide and restrain the moody madman, whose madness takes a form, at times, so repulsive to every womanly feeling. She intimates that she should not wonder should Augusta grow weary of the office.

Lady Byron continues her statement thus:--

> 'When I arrived at Kirkby Mallory, my parents were unacquainted with the existence of any causes likely to destroy my prospects of happiness; and, when I communicated to them the opinion that had been formed concerning Lord Byron's state of mind, they were most anxious to promote his restoration by every means in their power. They assured those relations that were with him in London that "they would devote their whole case and attention to the alleviation of his malady."'

Here we have a quotation {190a} from a letter written by Lady Milbanke to the anxious 'relations' who are taking counsel about Lord Byron in town. Lady Byron also adds, in justification of her mother from Lord Byron's slanders, 'She had always treated him with an affectionate consideration and indulgence, which extended to every little peculiarity of his feelings. Never did an irritating word escape her lips in her whole intercourse with him.'

Now comes a remarkable part of Lady Byron's statement:--

'The accounts given me after I left Lord Byron, by those in constant intercourse with him, {190b} added to those doubts which had before transiently occurred to my mind as to the reality of the alleged disease; and the reports of his medical attendants were far from establishing anything like lunacy.'

When these doubts arose in her mind, it is not natural to suppose that they should, at first, involve Mrs. Leigh. She still appears to Lady Byron as the devoted, believing sister, fully convinced of her brother's insanity, and endeavouring to restrain and control him.

But if Lord Byron were sane, if the purposes he had avowed to his wife were real, he must have lied about his sister in the past, and perhaps have the worst intentions for the future.

The horrors of that state of vacillation between the conviction of insanity and the commencing conviction of something worse can scarcely be told.

At all events, the wife's doubts extend so far that she speaks out to her parents. 'UNDER THIS UNCERTAINTY,' says the statement, 'I deemed it right to communicate to my parents, that, if I were to consider Lord Byron's past conduct as that of a person of sound mind, nothing could induce me to return to him. It therefore appeared expedient, both to them and to myself, to consult the ablest advisers. For that object, and also to obtain still further information respecting appearances which indicated mental derangement, my mother determined to go to London. She

was empowered by me to take legal opinion on a written statement of mine; though I then had reasons for reserving a part of the case from the knowledge even of my father and mother.'

It is during this time of uncertainty that the next letter to Mrs. Leigh may be placed. It seems to be rather a fragment of a letter than a whole one: perhaps it is an extract; in which case it would be desirable, if possible, to view it in connection with the remaining text:--

Jan. 25, 1816.

'MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,--Shall I still be your sister? I must resign my right to be so considered; but I don't think that will make any difference in the kindness I have so uniformly experienced from you.'

This fragment is not signed, nor finished in any way, but indicates that the writer is about to take a decisive step.

On the 17th, as we have seen, Lady Milbanke had written, inviting Lord Byron. Subsequently she went to London to make more particular inquiries into his state. This fragment seems part of a letter from Lady Byron, called forth in view of some evidence resulting from her mother's observations. {192}

Lady Byron now adds,--

'Being convinced by the result of these inquiries, and by the tenour

of Lord Byron's proceedings, that the notion of insanity was an illusion, I no longer hesitated to authorize such measures as were necessary in order to secure me from ever being again placed in his power.

'Conformably with this resolution, my father wrote to him, on the 2nd of February, to request an amicable separation.'

The following letter to Mrs. Leigh is dated the day after this application, and is in many respects a noticeable one:--

'KIRKBY MALLORY, Feb. 3, 1816.

'MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,--You are desired by your brother to ask if my father has acted with my concurrence in proposing a separation. He has. It cannot be supposed, that, in my present distressing situation, I am capable of stating in a detailed manner the reasons which will not only justify this measure, but compel me to take it; and it never can be my wish to remember unnecessarily [sic] those injuries for which, however deep, I feel no resentment. I will now only recall to Lord Byron's mind his avowed and insurmountable aversion to the married state, and the desire and determination he has expressed ever since its commencement to free himself from that bondage, as finding it quite insupportable, though candidly acknowledging that no effort of duty or affection has been wanting on my part. He has too painfully convinced me that all these attempts to contribute towards his happiness were wholly useless, and most

unwelcome to him. I enclose this letter to my father, wishing it to receive his sanction.

'Ever yours most affectionately,

'A. I. BYRON.'

We observe in this letter that it is written to be shown to Lady Byron's father, and receive his sanction; and, as that father was in ignorance of all the deeper causes of trouble in the case, it will be seen that the letter must necessarily be a reserved one. This sufficiently accounts for the guarded character of the language when speaking of the causes of separation. One part of the letter incidentally overthrows Lord Byron's statement, which he always repeated during his life, and which is repeated for him now; namely, that his wife forsook him, instead of being, as she claims, expelled by him.

She recalls to Lord Byron's mind the 'desire and determination he has expressed ever since his marriage to free himself from its bondage.'

This is in perfect keeping with the 'absolute desire,' signified by writing, that she should leave his house on the earliest day possible; and she places the cause of the separation on his having 'too painfully' convinced her that he does not want her--as a wife.

It appears that Augusta hesitates to show this note to her brother. It is bringing on a crisis which she, above all others, would most wish to

avoid.

In the meantime, Lady Byron receives a letter from Lord Byron, which makes her feel it more than ever essential to make the decision final. I have reason to believe that this letter is preserved in Lady Byron's papers:--

'Feb. 4, 1816.

'I hope, my dear A., that you would on no account withhold from your brother the letter which I sent yesterday in answer to yours written by his desire, particularly as one which I have received from himself to-day renders it still more important that he should know the contents of that addressed to you. I am, in haste and not very well,

'Yours most affectionately,

'A. I. BYRON.'

The last of this series of letters is less like the style of Lady Byron than any of them. We cannot judge whether it is a whole consecutive letter, or fragments from a letter, selected and united. There is a great want of that clearness and precision which usually characterised Lady Byron's style. It shows, however, that the decision is made,--a decision which she regrets on account of the sister who has tried so long to prevent it.

'KIRKBY MALLORY, Feb. 14, 1816.

'The present sufferings of all may yet be repaid in blessings. Do not despair absolutely, dearest; and leave me but enough of your interest to afford you any consolation by partaking of that sorrow which I am most unhappy to cause thus unintentionally. You will be of my opinion hereafter; and at present your bitterest reproach would be forgiven, though Heaven knows you have considered me more than a thousand would have done,--more than anything but my affection for B., one most dear to you, could deserve. I must not remember these feelings. Farewell! God bless you from the bottom of my heart!

'A. I. B.'

We are here to consider that Mrs. Leigh has stood to Lady Byron in all this long agony as her only confidante and friend; that she has denied the charges her brother has made, and referred them to insanity, admitting insane attempts upon herself which she has been obliged to watch over and control.

Lady Byron has come to the conclusion that Augusta is mistaken as to insanity; that there is a real wicked purpose and desire on the part of the brother, not as yet believed in by the sister. She regards the sister as one, who, though deceived and blinded, is still worthy of confidence and consideration; and so says to her, 'You will be of my opinion hereafter.'

She says, 'You have considered me more than a thousand would have done.' Mrs. Leigh is, in Lady Byron's eyes, a most abused and innocent woman, who, to spare her sister in her delicate situation, has taken on herself the whole charge of a maniacal brother, although suffering from him language and actions of the most injurious kind. That Mrs. Leigh did not flee the house at once under such circumstances, and wholly decline the management of the case, seems to Lady Byron consideration and self-sacrifice greater than she can acknowledge.

The knowledge of the whole extent of the truth came to Lady Byron's mind at a later period.

We now take up the history from Lushington's letter to Lady Byron, published at the close of her statement.

The application to Lord Byron for an act of separation was positively refused at first; it being an important part of his policy that all the responsibility and insistence should come from his wife, and that he should appear forced into it contrary to his will.

Dr. Lushington, however, says to Lady Byron,--

> 'I was originally consulted by Lady Noel on your behalf while you were in the country. The circumstances detailed by her were such as justified a separation; but they were not of that aggravated description as to render such a measure indispensable. On Lady Noel's representations, I deemed a reconciliation with Lord Byron

practicable, and felt most sincerely a wish to aid in effecting it. There was not, on Lady Noel's part, any exaggeration of the facts, nor, so far as I could perceive, any determination to prevent a return to Lord Byron: certainly none was expressed when I spoke of a reconciliation.'

In this crisis, with Lord Byron refusing the separation, with Lushington expressing a wish to aid in a reconciliation, and Lady Noel not expressing any aversion to it, the whole strain of the dreadful responsibility comes upon the wife.

She resolves to ask counsel of her lawyer, in view of a statement of the whole case.

Lady Byron is spoken of by Lord Byron (letter 233) as being in town with her father on the 29th of February; viz., fifteen days after the date of the last letter to Mrs. Leigh. It must have been about this time, then, that she laid her whole case before Lushington; and he gave it a thorough examination.

The result was, that Lushington expressed in the most decided terms his conviction that reconciliation was impossible. The language be uses is very striking:--

'When you came to town in about a fortnight, or perhaps more, after my first interview with Lady Noel, I was, for the first time, informed by you of facts utterly unknown, as I have no doubt, to Sir Ralph and

Lady Noel. On receiving this additional information, my opinion was entirely changed. I considered a reconciliation impossible. I declared my opinion, and added, that, if such an idea should be entertained, I could not, either professionally or otherwise, take any part towards effecting it.'

It does not appear in this note what effect the lawyer's examination of the case had on Lady Byron's mind. By the expressions he uses, we should infer that she may still have been hesitating as to whether a reconciliation might not be her duty.

This hesitancy he does away with most decisively, saying, 'A reconciliation is impossible;' and, supposing Lady Byron or her friends desirous of one, he declares positively that he cannot, either professionally as a lawyer or privately as a friend, have anything to do with effecting it.

The lawyer, it appears, has drawn, from the facts of the case, inferences deeper and stronger than those which presented themselves to the mind of the young woman; and he instructs her in the most absolute terms.

Fourteen years after, in 1830, for the first time the world was astonished by this declaration from Dr. Lushington, in language so pronounced and positive that there could be no mistake.

Lady Byron had stood all these fourteen years slandered by her husband, and misunderstood by his friends, when, had she so chosen, this opinion

of Dr. Lushington's could have been at once made public, which fully justified her conduct.

If, as the 'Blackwood' of July insinuates, the story told to Lushington was a malignant slander, meant to injure Lord Byron, why did she suppress the judgment of her counsel at a time when all the world was on her side, and this decision would have been the decisive blow against her husband? Why, by sealing the lips of counsel, and of all whom she could influence, did she deprive herself finally of the very advantage for which it has been assumed she fabricated the story?

CHAPTER IV. THE CHARACTER OF THE TWO WITNESSES COMPARED.

It will be observed, that, in this controversy, we are confronting two opposing stories,--one of Lord and the other of Lady Byron; and the statements from each are in point-blank contradiction.

Lord Byron states that his wife deserted him. Lady Byron states that he expelled her, and reminds him, in her letter to Augusta Leigh, that the expulsion was a deliberate one, and that he had purposed it from the beginning of their marriage.

Lord Byron always stated that he was ignorant why his wife left him, and was desirous of her return. Lady Byron states that he told her that he would force her to leave him, and to leave him in such a way that the whole blame of the separation should always rest on her, and not on him.

To say nothing of any deeper or darker accusations on either side, here, in the very outworks of the story, the two meet point-blank.

In considering two opposing stories, we always, as a matter of fact, take into account the character of the witnesses.

If a person be literal and exact in his usual modes of speech, reserved, careful, conscientious, and in the habit of observing minutely the minor details of time, place, and circumstances, we give weight to his

testimony from these considerations. But if a person be proved to have singular and exceptional principles with regard to truth; if he be universally held by society to be so in the habit of mystification, that large allowances must be made for his statements; if his assertions at one time contradict those made at another; and if his statements, also, sometimes come in collision with those of his best friends, so that, when his language is reported, difficulties follow, and explanations are made necessary,--all this certainly disqualifies him from being considered a trustworthy witness.

All these disqualifications belong in a remarkable degree to Lord Byron, on the oft-repeated testimony of his best friends.

We shall first cite the following testimony, given in an article from 'Under the Crown,' which is written by an early friend and ardent admirer of Lord Byron:--

> 'Byron had one pre-eminent fault,--a fault which must be considered as deeply criminal by everyone who does not, as I do, believe it to have resulted from monomania. He had a morbid love of a bad reputation. There was hardly an offence of which he would not, with perfect indifference, accuse himself. An old schoolfellow who met him on the Continent told me that he would continually write paragraphs against himself in the foreign journals, and delight in their republication by the English newspapers as in the success of a practical joke. Whenever anybody has related anything discreditable of Byron, assuring me that it must be true, for he heard it from himself, I always felt that he

could not have spoken upon worse authority; and that, in all probability, the tale was a pure invention. If I could remember, and were willing to repeat, the various misdoings which I have from time to time heard him attribute to himself, I could fill a volume. But I never believed them. I very soon became aware of this strange idiosyncrasy: it puzzled me to account for it; but there it was, a sort of diseased and distorted vanity. The same eccentric spirit would induce him to report things which were false with regard to his family, which anybody else would have concealed, though true. He told me more than once that his father was insane, and killed himself. I shall never forget the manner in which he first told me this. While washing his hands, and singing a gay Neapolitan air, he stopped, looked round at me, and said, "There always was madness in the family." Then, after continuing his washing and his song, he added, as if speaking of a matter of the slightest indifference, "My father cut his throat." The contrast between the tenour of the subject and the levity of the expression was fearfully painful: it was like a stanza of "Don Juan." In this instance, I had no doubt that the fact was as he related it; but in speaking of it, only a few years since, to an old lady in whom I had perfect confidence, she assured me that it was not so. Mr. Byron, who was her cousin, had been extremely wild, but was quite sane, and had died very quietly in his bed. What Byron's reason could have been for thus calumniating not only himself but the blood which was flowing in his veins, who can divine? But, for some reason or other, it seemed to be his determined purpose to keep himself unknown to the great body of his fellow-creatures; to present himself to their view in moral masquerade.'

Certainly the character of Lord Byron here given by his friend is not the kind to make him a trustworthy witness in any case: on the contrary, it seems to show either a subtle delight in falsehood for falsehood's sake, or else the wary artifices of a man who, having a deadly secret to conceal, employs many turnings and windings to throw the world off the scent. What intriguer, having a crime to cover, could devise a more artful course than to send half a dozen absurd stories to the press, which should, after a while, be traced back to himself, till the public should gradually look on all it heard from him as the result of this eccentric humour?

The easy, trifling air with which Lord Byron made to this friend a false statement in regard to his father would lead naturally to the inquiry, on what other subjects, equally important to the good name of others, he might give false testimony with equal indifference.

When Medwin's 'Conversations with Lord Byron' were first published, they contained a number of declarations of the noble lord affecting the honour and honesty of his friend and publisher Murray. These appear to have been made in the same way as those about his father, and with equal indifference. So serious were the charges, that Mr. Murray's friends felt that he ought, in justice to himself, to come forward and confront them with the facts as stated in Byron's letters to himself; and in vol. x., p.143, of Murray's standard edition, accordingly these false statements are confronted with the letters of Lord Byron. The statements, as reported, are of a most material and vital nature,

relating to Murray's financial honour and honesty, and to his general truthfulness and sincerity. In reply, Murray opposes to them the accounts of sums paid for different works, and letters from Byron exactly contradicting his own statements as to Murray's character.

The subject, as we have seen, was discussed in 'The Noctes.' No doubt appears to be entertained that Byron made the statements to Medwin; and the theory of accounting for them is, that 'Byron was "bamming" him.'

It seems never to have occurred to any of these credulous gentlemen, who laughed at others for being 'bammed,' that Byron might be doing the very same thing by themselves. How many of his so-called packages sent to Lady Byron were real packages, and how many were mystifications? We find, in two places at least in his Memoir, letters to Lady Byron, written and shown to others, which, he says, were never sent by him. He told Lady Blessington that he was in the habit of writing to her constantly. Was this 'bamming'? Was he 'bamming,' also, when he told the world that Lady Byron suddenly deserted him, quite to his surprise, and that he never, to his dying day, could find out why?

Lady Blessington relates, that, in one of his conversations with her, he entertained her by repeating epigrams and lampoons, in which many of his friends were treated with severity. She inquired of him, in case he should die, and such proofs of his friendship come before the public, what would be the feelings of these friends, who had supposed themselves to stand so high in his good graces. She says,--

'"That," said Byron, "is precisely one of the ideas that most amuses me. I often fancy the rage and humiliation of my quondam friends in hearing the truth, at least from me, for the first time, and when I am beyond the reach of their malice. . . . What grief," continued Byron, laughing, "could resist the charges of ugliness, dulness, or any of the thousand nameless defects, personal or mental, 'that flesh is heir to,' when reprisal or recantation was impossible? . . . People are in such daily habits of commenting on the defects of friends, that they are unconscious of the unkindness of it. . . Now, I write down as well as speak my sentiments of those who think they have gulled me; and I only wish, in case I die before them, that I might return to witness the effects my posthumous opinions of them are likely to produce in their minds. What good fun this would be! . . . You don't seem to value this as you ought," said Byron with one of his sardonic smiles, seeing I looked, as I really felt, surprised at his avowed insincerity. "I feel the same pleasure in anticipating the rage and mortification of my soi-disant friends at the discovery of my real sentiments of them, that a miser may be supposed to feel while making a will that will disappoint all the expectants that have been toadying him for years. Then how amusing it will be to compare my posthumous with my previously given opinions, the one throwing ridicule on the other!"'

It is asserted, in a note to 'The Noctes,' that Byron, besides his Autobiography, prepared a voluminous dictionary of all his friends and acquaintances, in which brief notes of their persons and character were given, with his opinion of them. It was not considered that the

publication of this would add to the noble lord's popularity; and it has never appeared.

In Hunt's Life of Byron, there is similar testimony. Speaking of Byron's carelessness in exposing his friends' secrets, and showing or giving away their letters, he says,--

> 'If his five hundred confidants, by a reticence as remarkable as his laxity, had not kept his secrets better than he did himself, the very devil might have been played with I don't know how many people. But there was always this saving reflection to be made, that the man who could be guilty of such extravagances for the sake of making an impression might be guilty of exaggeration, or inventing what astonished you; and indeed, though he was a speaker of the truth on ordinary occasions,--that is to say, he did not tell you he had seen a dozen horses when he had seen only two,--yet, as he professed not to value the truth when in the way of his advantage (and there was nothing he thought more to his advantage than making you stare at him), the persons who were liable to suffer from his incontinence had all the right in the world to the benefit of this consideration.'
> {205a}

With a person of such mental and moral habits as to truth, the inquiry always must be, Where does mystification end, and truth begin?

If a man is careless about his father's reputation for sanity, and reports him a crazy suicide; if he gaily accuses his publisher and good

friend of double-dealing, shuffling, and dishonesty; if he tells stories about Mrs. Clermont, {205b} to which his sister offers a public refutation,--is it to be supposed that he will always tell the truth about his wife, when the world is pressing him hard, and every instinct of self-defence is on the alert?

And then the ingenuity that could write and publish false documents about himself, that they might reappear in London papers,--to what other accounts might it not be turned? Might it not create documents, invent statements, about his wife as well as himself?

The document so ostentatiously given to M. G. Lewis 'for circulation among friends in England' was a specimen of what the Noctes Club would call 'bamming.'

If Byron wanted a legal investigation, why did he not take it in the first place, instead of signing the separation? If he wanted to cancel it, as he said in this document, why did he not go to London, and enter a suit for the restitution of conjugal rights, or a suit in chancery to get possession of his daughter? That this was in his mind, passages in Medwin's 'Conversations' show. He told Lady Blessington also that he might claim his daughter in chancery at any time.

Why did he not do it? Either of these two steps would have brought on that public investigation he so longed for. Can it be possible that all the friends who passed this private document from hand to hand never suspected that they were being 'bammed' by it?

But it has been universally assumed, that, though Byron was thus remarkably given to mystification, yet all his statements in regard to this story are to be accepted, simply because he makes them. Why must we accept them, any more than his statements as to Murray or his own father?

So we constantly find Lord Byron's incidental statements coming in collision with those of others: for example, in his account of his marriage, he tells Medwin that Lady Byron's maid was put between his bride and himself, on the same seat, in the wedding journey. The lady's maid herself, Mrs. Mimms, says she was sent before them to Halnaby, and was there to receive them when they alighted.

He said of Lady Byron's mother, 'She always detested me, and had not the decency to conceal it in her own house. Dining with her one day, I broke a tooth, and was in great pain; which I could not help showing. "It will do you good," said Lady Noel; "I am glad of it!"'

Lady Byron says, speaking of her mother, 'She always treated him with an affectionate consideration and indulgence, which extended to every little peculiarity of his feelings. Never did an irritating word escape her.'

Lord Byron states that the correspondence between him and Lady Byron, after his refusal, was first opened by her. Lady Byron's friends deny the statement, and assert that the direct contrary is the fact.

Thus we see that Lord Byron's statements are directly opposed to those of

his family in relation to his father; directly against Murray's accounts, and his own admission to Murray; directly against the statement of the lady's maid as to her position in the journey; directly against Mrs. Leigh's as to Mrs. Clermont, and against Lady Byron as to her mother.

We can see, also, that these misstatements were so fully perceived by the men of his times, that Medwin's 'Conversations' were simply laughed at as an amusing instance of how far a man might be made the victim of a mystification. Christopher North thus sentences the book:--

> 'I don't mean to call Medwin a liar . . . The captain lies, sir, but it is under a thousand mistakes. Whether Byron bammed him, or he, by virtue of his own egregious stupidity, was the sole and sufficient bammifier of himself, I know not; neither greatly do I care. This much is certain, . . . that the book throughout is full of things that were not, and most resplendently deficient quoad the things that were.'

Yet it is on Medwin's 'Conversations' alone that many of the magazine assertions in regard to Lady Byron are founded.

It is on that authority that Lady Byron is accused of breaking open her husband's writing-desk in his absence, and sending the letters she found there to the husband of a lady compromised by them; and likewise that Lord Byron is declared to have paid back his wife's ten-thousand-pound wedding portion, and doubled it. Moore makes no such statements; and his remarks about Lord Byron's use of his wife's money are unmistakable

evidence to the contrary. Moore, although Byron's ardent partisan, was too well informed to make assertions with regard to him, which, at that time, it would have been perfectly easy to refute.

All these facts go to show that Lord Byron's character for accuracy or veracity was not such as to entitle him to ordinary confidence as a witness, especially in a case where he had the strongest motives for misstatement.

And if we consider that the celebrated Autobiography was the finished, careful work of such a practised 'mystifier,' who can wonder that it presented a web of such intermingled truth and lies that there was no such thing as disentangling it, and pointing out where falsehood ended and truth began?

But in regard to Lady Byron, what has been the universal impression of the world? It has been alleged against her that she was a precise, straightforward woman, so accustomed to plain, literal dealings, that she could not understand the various mystifications of her husband; and from that cause arose her unhappiness. Byron speaks, in 'The Sketch,' of her peculiar truthfulness; and even in the 'Clytemnestra' poem, when accusing her of lying, he speaks of her as departing from

'The early truth that was her proper praise.'

Lady Byron's careful accuracy as to dates, to time, place, and circumstances, will probably be vouched for by all the very large number

of persons whom the management of her extended property and her works of benevolence brought to act as co-operators or agents with her. She was not a person in the habit of making exaggerated or ill-considered statements. Her published statement of 1830 is clear, exact, accurate, and perfectly intelligible. The dates are carefully ascertained and stated, the expressions are moderate, and all the assertions firm and perfectly definite.

It therefore seems remarkable that the whole reasoning on this Byron matter has generally been conducted by assuming all Lord Byron's statements to be true, and requiring all Lady Byron's statements to be sustained by other evidence.

If Lord Byron asserts that his wife deserted him, the assertion is accepted without proof; but, if Lady Byron asserts that he ordered her to leave, that requires proof. Lady Byron asserts that she took counsel, on this order of Lord Byron, with his family friends and physician, under the idea that it originated in insanity. The 'Blackwood' asks, "What family friends?' says it doesn't know of any; and asks proof.

If Lord Byron asserts that he always longed for a public investigation of the charges against him, the 'Quarterly' and 'Blackwood' quote the saying with ingenuous confidence. They are obliged to admit that he refused to stand that public test; that he signed the deed of separation rather than meet it. They know, also, that he could have at any time instituted suits against Lady Byron that would have brought the whole matter into court, and that he did not. Why did he not? The 'Quarterly' simply

intimates that such suits would have been unpleasant. Why? On account of personal delicacy? The man that wrote 'Don Juan,' and furnished the details of his wedding-night, held back from clearing his name by delicacy! It is astonishing to what extent this controversy has consisted in simply repeating Lord Byron's assertions over and over again, and calling the result proof.

Now, we propose a different course. As Lady Byron is not stated by her warm admirers to have had any monomania for speaking untruths on any subject, we rank her value as a witness at a higher rate than Lord Byron's. She never accused her parents of madness or suicide, merely to make a sensation; never 'bammed' an acquaintance by false statements concerning the commercial honour of anyone with whom she was in business relations; never wrote and sent to the press as a clever jest false statements about herself; and never, in any other ingenious way, tampered with truth. We therefore hold it to be a mere dictate of reason and common sense, that, in all cases where her statements conflict with her husband's, hers are to be taken as the more trustworthy.

The 'London Quarterly,' in a late article, distinctly repudiates Lady Byron's statements as sources of evidence, and throughout quotes statements of Lord Byron as if they had the force of self-evident propositions. We consider such a course contrary to common sense as well as common good manners.

The state of the case is just this: If Lord Byron did not make false statements on this subject it was certainly an exception to his usual

course. He certainly did make such on a great variety of other subjects. By his own showing, he had a peculiar pleasure in falsifying language, and in misleading and betraying even his friends.

But, if Lady Byron gave false witness upon this subject, it was an exception to the whole course of her life.

The habits of her mind, the government of her conduct, her life-long reputation, all were those of a literal, exact truthfulness.

The accusation of her being untruthful was first brought forward by her husband in the 'Clytemnestra' poem, in the autumn of 1816; but it never was publicly circulated till after his death, and it was first formally made the basis of a published attack on Lady Byron in the July 'Blackwood' of 1869. Up to that time, we look in vain through current literature for any indications that the world regarded Lady Byron otherwise than as a cold, careful, prudent woman, who made no assertions, and had no confidants. When she spoke in 1830, it is perfectly evident that Christopher North and his circle believed what she said, though reproving her for saying it at all.

The 'Quarterly' goes on to heap up a number of vague assertions,--that Lady Byron, about the time of her separation, made a confidant of a young officer; that she told the clergyman of Ham of some trials with Lord Ockham; and that she told stories of different things at different times.

All this is not proof: it is mere assertion, and assertion made to

produce prejudice. It is like raising a whirlwind of sand to blind the eyes that are looking for landmarks. It is quite probable Lady Byron told different stories about Lord Byron at various times. No woman could have a greater variety of stories to tell; and no woman ever was so persecuted and pursued and harassed, both by public literature and private friendship, to say something. She had plenty of causes for a separation, without the fatal and final one. In her conversations with Lady Anne Barnard, for example, she gives reasons enough for a separation, though none of them are the chief one. It is not different stories, but contradictory stories, that must be relied on to disprove the credibility of a witness. The 'Quarterly' has certainly told a great number of different stories,--stories which may prove as irreconcilable with each other as any attributed to Lady Byron; but its denial of all weight to her testimony is simply begging the whole question under consideration.

A man gives testimony about the causes of a railroad accident, being the only eye-witness.

The opposing counsel begs, whatever else you do, you will not admit that man's testimony. You ask, 'Why? Has he ever been accused of want of veracity on other subjects?'--'No: he has stood high as a man of probity and honour for years.'--'Why, then, throw out his testimony?'

'Because he lies in this instance,' says the adversary: 'his testimony does not agree with this and that.'--'Pardon me, that is the very point in question,' say you: 'we expect to prove that it does agree with this

and that.'

Because certain letters of Lady Byron's do not agree with the 'Quarterly's' theory of the facts of the separation, it at once assumes that she is an untruthful witness, and proposes to throw out her evidence altogether.

We propose, on the contrary, to regard Lady Byron's evidence with all the attention due to the statement of a high-minded conscientious person, never in any other case accused of violation of truth; we also propose to show it to be in strict agreement with all well-authenticated facts and documents; and we propose to treat Lord Byron's evidence as that of a man of great subtlety, versed in mystification and delighting in it, and who, on many other subjects, not only deceived, but gloried in deception; and then we propose to show that it contradicts well-established facts and received documents.

One thing more we have to say concerning the laws of evidence in regard to documents presented in this investigation.

This is not a London West-End affair, but a grave historical inquiry, in which the whole English-speaking world are interested to know the truth.

As it is now too late to have the securities of a legal trial, certainly the rules of historical evidence should be strictly observed. All important documents should be presented in an entire state, with a plain and open account of their history,--who had them, where they were found,

and how preserved.

There have been most excellent, credible, and authentic documents produced in this case; and, as a specimen of them, we shall mention Lord Lindsay's letter, and the journal and letter it authenticates. Lord Lindsay at once comes forward, gives his name boldly, gives the history of the papers he produces, shows how they came to be in his hands, why never produced before, and why now. We feel confidence at once.

But in regard to the important series of letters presented as Lady Byron's, this obviously proper course has not been pursued. Though assumed to be of the most critical importance, no such distinct history of them was given in the first instance. The want of such evidence being noticed by other papers, the 'Quarterly' appears hurt that the high character of the magazine has not been a sufficient guarantee; and still deals in vague statements that the letters have been freely circulated, and that two noblemen of the highest character would vouch for them if necessary.

In our view, it is necessary. These noblemen should imitate Lord Lindsay's example,--give a fair account of these letters, under their own names; and then, we would add, it is needful for complete satisfaction to have the letters entire, and not in fragments.

The 'Quarterly' gave these letters with the evident implication that they are entirely destructive to Lady Byron's character as a witness. Now, has that magazine much reason to be hurt at even an insinuation on its

own character when making such deadly assaults on that of another? The individuals who bring forth documents that they suppose to be deadly to the character of a noble person, always in her generation held to be eminent for virtue, certainly should not murmur at being called upon to substantiate these documents in the manner usually expected in historical investigations.

We have shown that these letters do not contradict, but that they perfectly confirm the facts, and agree with the dates in Lady Byron's published statements of 1830; and this is our reason for deeming them authentic.

These considerations with regard to the manner of conducting the inquiry seem so obviously proper, that we cannot but believe that they will command a serious attention.

CHAPTER V. THE DIRECT ARGUMENT TO PROVE THE CRIME.

We shall now proceed to state the argument against Lord Byron.

1st, There is direct evidence that Lord Byron was guilty of some unusual immorality.

The evidence is not, as the 'Blackwood' says, that Lushington yielded assent to the ex parte statement of a client; nor, as the 'Quarterly' intimates, that he was affected by the charms of an attractive young woman.

The first evidence of it is the fact that Lushington and Romilly offered to take the case into court, and make there a public exhibition of the proofs on which their convictions were founded.

2nd, It is very strong evidence of this fact, that Lord Byron, while loudly declaring that he wished to know with what he was charged, declined this open investigation, and, rather than meet it, signed a paper which he had before refused to sign.

3rd, It is also strong evidence of this fact, that although secretly declaring to all his intimate friends that he still wished open investigation in a court of justice, and affirming his belief that his character was being ruined for want of it, he never afterwards took the

means to get it. Instead of writing a private handbill, he might have come to England and entered a suit; and he did not do it.

That Lord Byron was conscious of a great crime is further made probable by the peculiar malice he seemed to bear to his wife's legal counsel.

If there had been nothing to fear in that legal investigation wherewith they threatened him, why did he not only flee from it, but regard with a peculiar bitterness those who advised and proposed it? To an innocent man falsely accused, the certainties of law are a blessing and a refuge. Female charms cannot mislead in a court of justice; and the atrocities of rumour are there sifted, and deprived of power. A trial is not a threat to an innocent man: it is an invitation, an opportunity. Why, then, did he hate Sir Samuel Romilly, so that he exulted like a fiend over his tragical death? The letter in which he pours forth this malignity was so brutal, that Moore was obliged, by the general outcry of society, to suppress it. Is this the language of an innocent man who has been offered a fair trial under his country's laws? or of a guilty man, to whom the very idea of public trial means public exposure?

4th, It is probable that the crime was the one now alleged, because that was the most important crime charged against him by rumour at the period. This appears by the following extract of a letter from Shelley, furnished by the 'Quarterly,' dated Bath, Sept. 29, 1816:--

> 'I saw Kinnaird, and had a long talk with him. He informed me that Lady Byron was now in perfect health; that she was living with your

sister. I felt much pleasure from this intelligence. I consider the latter part of it as affording a decisive contradiction to the only important calumny that ever was advanced against you. On this ground, at least, it will become the world hereafter to be silent.'

It appears evident here that the charge of improper intimacy with his sister was, in the mind of Shelley, the only important one that had yet been made against Lord Byron.

It is fairly inferable, from Lord Byron's own statements, that his family friends believed this charge. Lady Byron speaks, in her statement, of 'nearest relatives' and family friends who were cognizant of Lord Byron's strange conduct at the time of the separation; and Lord Byron, in the letter to Bowles, before quoted, says that every one of his relations, except his sister, fell from him in this crisis like leaves from a tree in autumn. There was, therefore, not only this report, but such appearances in support of it as convinced those nearest to the scene, and best apprised of the facts; so that they fell from him entirely, notwithstanding the strong influence of family feeling. The Guiccioli book also mentions this same allegation as having arisen from peculiarities in Lord Byron's manner of treating his sister:--

'This deep, fraternal affection assumed at times, under the influence of his powerful genius, and under exceptional circumstances, an almost too passionate expression, which opened a fresh field to his enemies.' {219}

It appears, then, that there was nothing in the character of Lord Byron and of his sister, as they appeared before their generation, that prevented such a report from arising: on the contrary, there was something in their relations that made it seem probable. And it appears that his own family friends were so affected by it, that they, with one accord, deserted him. The 'Quarterly' presents the fact that Lady Byron went to visit Mrs. Leigh at this time, as triumphant proof that she did not then believe it. Can the 'Quarterly' show just what Lady Byron's state of mind was, or what her motives were, in making that visit?

The 'Quarterly' seems to assume, that no woman, without gross hypocrisy, can stand by a sister proven to have been guilty. We can appeal on this subject to all women. We fearlessly ask any wife, 'Supposing your husband and sister were involved together in an infamous crime, and that you were the mother of a young daughter whose life would be tainted by a knowledge of that crime, what would be your wish? Would you wish to proclaim it forthwith? or would you wish quietly to separate from your husband, and to cover the crime from the eye of man?'

It has been proved that Lady Byron did not reveal this even to her nearest relatives. It is proved that she sealed the mouths of her counsel, and even of servants, so effectually, that they remain sealed even to this day. This is evidence that she did not wish the thing known. It is proved also, that, in spite of her secrecy with her parents and friends, the rumour got out, and was spoken of by Shelley as the only important one.

Now, let us see how this note, cited by the 'Quarterly,' confirms one of Lady Byron's own statements. She says to Lady Anne Barnard,--

> 'I trust you understand my wishes, which never were to injure Lord Byron in any way; for, though he would not suffer me to remain his wife, he cannot prevent me from continuing his friend; and it was from considering myself as such that I silenced the accusations by which my own conduct might have been more fully justified.'

How did Lady Byron silence accusations? First, by keeping silence to her nearest relatives; second, by shutting the mouths of servants; third, by imposing silence on her friends,--as Lady Anne Barnard; fourth, by silencing her legal counsel; fifth, and most entirely, by treating Mrs. Leigh, before the world, with unaltered kindness. In the midst of the rumours, Lady Byron went to visit her; and Shelley says that the movement was effectual. Can the 'Quarterly' prove that, at this time, Mrs. Leigh had not confessed all, and thrown herself on Lady Byron's mercy?

It is not necessary to suppose great horror and indignation on the part of Lady Byron. She may have regarded her sister as the victim of a most singularly powerful tempter. Lord Byron, as she knew, had tried to corrupt her own morals and faith. He had obtained a power over some women, even in the highest circles in England, which had led them to forego the usual decorums of their sex, and had given rise to great scandals. He was a being of wonderful personal attractions. He had not only strong poetical, but also strong logical power. He was daring in speculation, and vigorous in sophistical argument; beautiful, dazzling,

and possessed of magnetic power of fascination. His sister had been kind and considerate to Lady Byron when Lord Byron was brutal and cruel. She had been overcome by him, as a weaker nature sometimes sinks under the force of a stronger one; and Lady Byron may really have considered her to be more sinned against than sinning.

Lord Byron, if we look at it rightly, did not corrupt Mrs. Leigh any more than he did the whole British public. They rebelled at the immorality of his conduct and the obscenity of his writings; and he resolved that they should accept both. And he made them do it. At first, they execrated 'Don Juan.' Murray was afraid to publish it. Women were determined not to read it. In 1819, Dr. William Maginn of the Noctes wrote a song against it in the following virtuous strain:--

'Be "Juan," then, unseen, unknown;
It must, or we shall rue it.
We may have virtue of our own:
Ah! why should we undo it?
The treasured faith of days long past
We still would prize o'er any,
And grieve to hear the ribald jeer
Of scamps like Don Giovanni.'

Lord Byron determined to conquer the virtuous scruples of the Noctes Club; and so we find this same Dr. William Maginn, who in 1819 wrote so valiantly, in 1822 declaring that he would rather have written a page of 'Don Juan' than a ton of 'Childe Harold.' All English morals were, in

like manner, formally surrendered to Lord Byron. Moore details his adulteries in Venice with unabashed particularity: artists send for pictures of his principal mistresses; the literary world call for biographical sketches of their points; Moore compares his wife and his last mistress in a neatly-turned sentence; and yet the professor of morals in Edinburgh University recommends the biography as pure, and having no mud in it. The mistress is lionized in London; and in 1869 is introduced to the world of letters by 'Blackwood,' and bid, 'without a blush, to say she loved'--

This much being done to all England, it is quite possible that a woman like Lady Byron, standing silently aside and surveying the course of things, may have thought that Mrs. Leigh was no more seduced than all the rest of the world, and have said as we feel disposed to say of that generation, and of a good many in this, 'Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone.'

The peculiar bitterness of remorse expressed in his works by Lord Byron is a further evidence that he had committed an unusual crime. We are aware that evidence cannot be drawn in this manner from an author's works merely, if unsupported by any external probability. For example, the subject most frequently and powerfully treated by Hawthorne is the influence of a secret, unconfessed crime on the soul: nevertheless, as Hawthorne is well known to have always lived a pure and regular life, nobody has ever suspected him of any greater sin than a vigorous imagination. But here is a man believed guilty of an uncommon immorality by the two best lawyers in England, and threatened with an open exposure,

which he does not dare to meet. The crime is named in society; his own relations fall away from him on account of it; it is only set at rest by the heroic conduct of his wife. Now, this man is stated by many of his friends to have had all the appearance of a man secretly labouring under the consciousness of crime. Moore speaks of this propensity in the following language:--

> 'I have known him more than once, as we sat together after dinner, and he was a little under the influence of wine, to fall seriously into this dark, self-accusing mood, and throw out hints of his past life with an air of gloom and mystery designed evidently to awaken curiosity and interest.'

Moore says that it was his own custom to dispel these appearances by ridicule, to which his friend was keenly alive. And he goes on to say,--

> 'It has sometimes occurred to me, that the occult causes of his lady's separation from him, round which herself and her legal advisers have thrown such formidable mystery, may have been nothing more than some imposture of this kind, some dimly-hinted confession of undefined horror, which, though intended by the relater to mystify and surprise, the hearer so little understood as to take in sober seriousness.'
> {225}

All we have to say is, that Lord Byron's conduct in this respect is exactly what might have been expected if he had a crime on his conscience.

The energy of remorse and despair expressed in 'Manfred' were so appalling and so vividly personal, that the belief was universal on the Continent that the experience was wrought out of some actual crime. Goethe expressed this idea, and had heard a murder imputed to Byron as the cause.

The allusion to the crime and consequences of incest is so plain in 'Manfred,' that it is astonishing that any one can pretend, as Galt does, that it had any other application.

The hero speaks of the love between himself and the imaginary being whose spirit haunts him as having been the deadliest sin, and one that has, perhaps, caused her eternal destruction.

'What is she now? A sufferer for my sins;
A thing I dare not think upon.'

He speaks of her blood as haunting him, and as being

'My blood,--the pure, warm stream
That ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours
When we were in our youth, and had one heart,
And loved each other as we should not love.'

This work was conceived in the commotion of mind immediately following his separation. The scenery of it was sketched in a journal sent to his

sister at the time.

In letter 377, defending the originality of the conception, and showing that it did not arise from reading 'Faust,' he says,--

> 'It was the Steinbach and the Jungfrau, and something else, more than Faustus, that made me write "Manfred."'

In letter 288, speaking of the various accounts given by critics of the origin of the story, he says,--

> 'The conjecturer is out, and knows nothing of the matter. I had a better origin than he could devise or divine for the soul of him.'

In letter 299, he says:--

'As to the germs of "Manfred," they may be found in the journal I sent to Mrs. Leigh, part of which you saw.'

It may be said, plausibly, that Lord Byron, if conscious of this crime, would not have expressed it in his poetry. But his nature was such that he could not help it. Whatever he wrote that had any real power was generally wrought out of self; and, when in a tumult of emotion, he could not help giving glimpses of the cause. It appears that he did know that he had been accused of incest, and that Shelley thought that accusation the only really important one; and yet, sensitive as he was to blame and reprobation, he ran upon this very subject most likely to re-awaken

scandal.

But Lord Byron's strategy was always of the bold kind. It was the plan of the fugitive, who, instead of running away, stations himself so near to danger, that nobody would ever think of looking for him there. He published passionate verses to his sister on this principle. He imitated the security of an innocent man in every thing but the unconscious energy of the agony which seized him when he gave vent to his nature in poetry. The boldness of his strategy is evident through all his life. He began by charging his wife with the very cruelty and deception which he was himself practising. He had spread a net for her feet, and he accused her of spreading a net for his. He had placed her in a position where she could not speak, and then leisurely shot arrows at her; and he represented her as having done the same by him. When he attacked her in 'Don Juan,' and strove to take from her the very protection {227}of womanly sacredness by putting her name into the mouth of every ribald, he did a bold thing, and he knew it. He meant to do a bold thing. There was a general outcry against it; and he fought it down, and gained his point. By sheer boldness and perseverance, he turned the public from his wife, and to himself, in the face of their very groans and protests. His 'Manfred' and his 'Cain' were parts of the same game. But the involuntary cry of remorse and despair pierced even through his own artifices, in a manner that produced a conviction of reality.

His evident fear and hatred of his wife were other symptoms of crime. There was no apparent occasion for him to hate her. He admitted that she had been bright, amiable, good, agreeable; that her marriage had been a

very uncomfortable one; and he said to Madame de Stael, that he did not doubt she thought him deranged. Why, then, did he hate her for wanting to live peaceably by herself? Why did he so fear her, that not one year of his life passed without his concocting and circulating some public or private accusation against her? She, by his own showing, published none against him. It is remarkable, that, in all his zeal to represent himself injured, he nowhere quotes a single remark from Lady Byron, nor a story coming either directly or indirectly from her or her family. He is in a fever in Venice, not from what she has spoken, but because she has sealed the lips of her counsel, and because she and her family do not speak: so that he professes himself utterly ignorant what form her allegations against him may take. He had heard from Shelley that his wife silenced the most important calumny by going to make Mrs. Leigh a visit; and yet he is afraid of her,--so afraid, that he tells Moore he expects she will attack him after death, and charges him to defend his grave.

Now, if Lord Byron knew that his wife had a deadly secret that she could tell, all this conduct is explicable: it is in the ordinary course of human nature. Men always distrust those who hold facts by which they can be ruined. They fear them; they are antagonistic to them; they cannot trust them. The feeling of Falkland to Caleb Williams, as portrayed in Godwin's masterly sketch, is perfectly natural, and it is exactly illustrative of what Byron felt for his wife. He hated her for having his secret; and, so far as a human being could do it, he tried to destroy her character before the world, that she might not have the power to testify against him. If we admit this solution, Byron's conduct is at

least that of a man who is acting as men ordinarily would act under such circumstances: if we do not, he is acting like a fiend. Let us look at admitted facts. He married his wife without love, in a gloomy, melancholy, morose state of mind. The servants testify to strange, unaccountable treatment of her immediately after marriage; such that her confidential maid advises her return to her parents. In Lady Byron's letter to Mrs. Leigh, she reminds Lord Byron that he always expressed a desire and determination to free himself from the marriage. Lord Byron himself admits to Madame de Stael that his behaviour was such, that his wife must have thought him insane. Now we are asked to believe, that simply because, under these circumstances, Lady Byron wished to live separate from her husband, he hated and feared her so that he could never let her alone afterwards; that he charged her with malice, slander, deceit, and deadly intentions against himself, merely out of spite, because she preferred not to live with him. This last view of the case certainly makes Lord Byron more unaccountably wicked than the other.

The first supposition shows him to us as a man in an agony of self-preservation; the second as a fiend, delighting in gratuitous deceit and cruelty.

Again: a presumption of this crime appears in Lord Byron's admission, in a letter to Moore, that he had an illegitimate child born before he left England, and still living at the time.

In letter 307, to Mr. Moore, under date Venice, Feb. 2, 1818, Byron says, speaking of Moore's loss of a child,--

'I know how to feel with you, because I am quite wrapped up in my own children. Besides my little legitimate, I have made unto myself an illegitimate since [since Ada's birth] to say nothing of one before; and I look forward to one of these as the pillar of my old age, supposing that I ever reach, as I hope I never shall, that desolating period.'

The illegitimate child that he had made to himself since Ada's birth was Allegra, born about nine or ten months after the separation. The other illegitimate alluded to was born before, and, as the reader sees, was spoken of as still living.

Moore appears to be puzzled to know who this child can be, and conjectures that it may possibly be the child referred to in an early poem, written, while a schoolboy of nineteen, at Harrow.

On turning back to the note referred to, we find two things: first, that the child there mentioned was not claimed by Lord Byron as his own, but that he asked his mother to care for it as belonging to a schoolmate now dead; second, that the infant died shortly after, and, consequently, could not be the child mentioned in this letter.

Now, besides this fact, that Lord Byron admitted a living illegitimate child born before Ada, we place this other fact, that there was a child in England which was believed to be his by those who had every opportunity of knowing.

On this subject we shall cite a passage from a letter recently received by us from England, and written by a person who appears well informed on the subject of his letter:--

> 'The fact is, the incest was first committed, and the child of it born before, shortly before, the Byron marriage. The child (a daughter) must not be confounded with the natural daughter of Lord Byron, born about a year after his separation.
>
> 'The history, more or less, of that child of incest, is known to many; for in Lady Byron's attempts to watch over her, and rescue her from ruin, she was compelled to employ various agents at different times.'

This letter contains a full recognition, by an intelligent person in England, of a child corresponding well with Lord Byron's declaration of an illegitimate, born before he left England.

Up to this point, we have, then, the circumstantial evidence against Lord Byron as follows:--

A good and amiable woman, who had married him from love, determined to separate from him.

Two of the greatest lawyers of England confirmed her in this decision, and threatened Lord Byron, that, unless he consented to this, they would expose the evidence against him in a suit for divorce. He fled from this

exposure, and never afterwards sought public investigation.

He was angry with and malicious towards the counsel who supported his wife; he was angry at and afraid of a wife who did nothing to injure him, and he made it a special object to defame and degrade her. He gave such evidence of remorse and fear in his writings as to lead eminent literary men to believe he had committed a great crime. The public rumour of his day specified what the crime was. His relations, by his own showing, joined against him. The report was silenced by his wife's efforts only. Lord Byron subsequently declares the existence of an illegitimate child, born before he left England. Corresponding to this, there is the history, known in England, of a child believed to be his, in whom his wife took an interest.

All these presumptions exist independently of any direct testimony from Lady Byron. They are to be admitted as true, whether she says a word one way or the other.

From this background of proof, I come forward, and testify to an interview with Lady Byron, in which she gave me specific information of the facts in the case. That I report the facts just as I received them from her, not altered or misremembered, is shown by the testimony of my sister, to whom I related them at the time. It cannot, then, be denied that I had this interview, and that this communication was made. I therefore testify that Lady Byron, for a proper purpose, and at a proper time, stated to me the following things:--

1. That the crime which separated her from Lord Byron was incest.

2. That she first discovered it by improper actions towards his sister, which, he meant to make her understand, indicated the guilty relation.

3. That he admitted it, reasoned on it, defended it, tried to make her an accomplice, and, failing in that, hated her and expelled her.

4. That he threatened her that he would make it his life's object to destroy her character.

5. That for a period she was led to regard this conduct as insanity, and to consider him only as a diseased person.

6. That she had subsequent proof that the facts were really as she suspected; that there had been a child born of the crime, whose history she knew; that Mrs. Leigh had repented.

The purpose for which this was stated to me was to ask, Was it her duty to make the truth fully known during her lifetime?

Here, then, is a man believed guilty of an unusual crime by two lawyers, the best in England, who have seen the evidence,--a man who dares not meet legal investigation. The crime is named in society, and deemed so far probable to the men of his generation as to be spoken of by Shelley as the only important allegation against him. He acts through life exactly like a man struggling with remorse, and afraid of detection; he

has all the restlessness and hatred and fear that a man has who feels that there is evidence which might destroy him. He admits an illegitimate child besides Allegra. A child believed to have been his is known to many in England. Added to all this, his widow, now advanced in years, and standing on the borders of eternity, being, as appears by her writings and conversation, of perfectly sound mind at the time, testifies to me the facts before named, which exactly correspond to probabilities.

I publish the statement; and the solicitors who hold Lady Byron's private papers do not deny the truth of the story. They try to cast discredit on me for speaking; but they do not say that I have spoken falsely, or that the story is not true. The lawyer who knew Lady Byron's story in 1816 does not now deny that this is the true one. Several persons in England testify that, at various times, and for various purposes, the same story has been told to them. Moreover, it appears from my last letter addressed to Lady Byron on this subject, that I recommended her to leave all necessary papers in the hands of some discreet persons, who, after both had passed away, should see that justice was done. The solicitors admit that Lady Byron has left sealed papers of great importance in the hands of trustees, with discretionary power. I have been informed very directly that the nature of these documents was such as to lead to the suppression of Lady Byron's life and writings. This is all exactly as it would be, if the story related by Lady Byron were the true one.

The evidence under this point of view is so strong, that a great effort has been made to throw out Lady Byron's testimony.

This attempt has been made on two grounds. 1st, That she was under a mental hallucination. This theory has been most ably refuted by the very first authority in England upon the subject. He says,--

'No person practically acquainted with the true characteristics of insanity would affirm, that, had this idea of "incest" been an insane hallucination, Lady Byron could, from the lengthened period which intervened between her unhappy marriage and death, have refrained from exhibiting it, not only to legal advisers and trustees (assuming that she revealed to them the fact), but to others, exacting no pledge of secrecy from them as to her mental impressions. Lunatics do for a time, and for some special purpose, most cunningly conceal their delusions; but they have not the capacity to struggle for thirty-six years, as Lady Byron must have done, with so frightful an hallucination, without the insane state of mind becoming obvious to those with whom they are daily associating. Neither is it consistent with experience to suppose, that, if Lady Byron had been a monomaniac, her state of disordered understanding would have been restricted to one hallucination. Her diseased brain, affecting the normal action of thought, would, in all probability, have manifested other symptoms besides those referred to of aberration of intellect.

'During the last thirty years, I have not met with a case of insanity (assuming the hypothesis of hallucination) at all parallel with that of Lady Byron. In my experience, it is unique. I never saw a patient with such a delusion.'

We refer our readers to a careful study of Dr. Forbes Winslow's consideration of this subject given in Part III. Anyone who has been familiar with the delicacy and acuteness of Dr. Winslow, as shown in his work on obscure diseases of the brain and nerves, must feel that his positive assertion on this ground is the best possible evidence. We here gratefully acknowledge our obligations to Dr. Winslow for the corrected proof of his valuable letter, which he has done us the honour to send for this work. We shall consider that his argument, in connection with what the reader may observe of Lady Byron's own writings, closes that issue of the case completely.

The other alternative is, that Lady Byron deliberately committed false witness. This was the ground assumed by the 'Blackwood,' when in July, 1869, it took upon itself the responsibility of re-opening the Byron controversy. It is also the ground assumed by 'The London Quarterly' of to-day.

Both say, in so many words, that no crime was imputed to Lord Byron; that the representations made to Lushington in the beginning were false ones; and that the story told to Lady Byron's confidential friends in later days was also false.

Let us examine this theory. In the first place, it requires us to believe in the existence of a moral monster of whom Madame Brinvilliers is cited as the type. The 'Blackwood,' let it be remembered, opens the controversy with the statement that Lady Byron was a Madame Brinvilliers. The 'Quarterly' does not shrink from the same assumption.

Let us consider the probability of this question.

If Lady Byron were such a woman, and wished to ruin her husband's reputation in order to save her own, and, being perfectly unscrupulous, had circulated against him a story of unnatural crime which had no proofs, how came two of the first lawyers of England to assume the responsibility of offering to present her case in open court? How came her husband, if he knew himself guiltless, to shrink from that public investigation which must have demonstrated his innocence? Most astonishing of all, when he fled from trial, and the report got abroad against him in England, and was believed even by his own relations, why did not his wife avail herself of the moment to complete her victory? If at that moment she had publicly broken with Mrs. Leigh, she might have confirmed every rumour. Did she do it? and why not? According to the 'Blackwood,' we have here a woman who has made up a frightful story to ruin her husband's reputation, yet who takes every pains afterwards to prevent its being ruined. She fails to do the very thing she undertakes; and for years after, rather than injure him, she loses public sympathy, and, by sealing the lips of her legal counsel, deprives herself of the advantage of their testimony.

Moreover, if a desire for revenge could have been excited in her, it would have been provoked by the first publication of the fourth canto of 'Childe Harold,' when she felt that Byron was attacking her before the world. Yet we have Lady Anne Barnard's testimony, that, at this time, she was so far from wishing to injure him, that all her communications

were guarded by cautious secrecy. At this time, also, she had a strong party in England, to whom she could have appealed. Again: when 'Don Juan' was first printed, it excited a violent re-action against Lord Byron. Had his wife chosen then to accuse him, and display the evidence she had shown to her counsel, there is little doubt that all the world would have stood with her; but she did not. After his death, when she spoke at last, there seems little doubt from the strength of Dr. Lushington's language, that Lady Byron had a very strong case, and that, had she been willing, her counsel could have told much more than he did. She might then have told her whole story, and been believed. Her word was believed by Christopher North, and accepted as proof that Byron had been a great criminal. Had revenge been her motive, she could have spoken the ONE WORD more that North called for.

The 'Quarterly' asks why she waited till everybody concerned was dead. There is an obvious answer. Because, while there was anybody living to whom the testimony would have been utterly destructive, there were the best reasons for withholding it. When all were gone from earth, and she herself was in constant expectation of passing away, there was a reason, and a proper one, why she should speak. By nature and principle truthful, she had had the opportunity of silently watching the operation of a permitted lie upon a whole generation. She had been placed in a position in which it was necessary, by silence, to allow the spread and propagation through society of a radical falsehood. Lord Byron's life, fame, and genius had all struck their roots into this lie, been nourished by it, and had derived thence a poisonous power.

In reading this history, it will be remarked that he pleaded his personal misfortunes in his marriage as excuses for every offence against morality, and that the literary world of England accepted the plea, and tolerated and justified the crimes. Never before, in England, had adultery been spoken of in so respectful a manner, and an adulteress openly praised and feted, and obscene language and licentious images publicly tolerated; and all on the plea of a man's private misfortunes.

There was, therefore, great force in the suggestion made to Lady Byron, that she owed a testimony in this case to truth and justice, irrespective of any personal considerations. There is no more real reason for allowing the spread of a hurtful falsehood that affects ourselves than for allowing one that affects our neighbour. This falsehood had corrupted the literature and morals of both England and America, and led to the public toleration, by respectable authorities, of forms of vice at first indignantly rejected. The question was, Was this falsehood to go on corrupting literature as long as history lasted? Had the world no right to true history? Had she who possessed the truth no responsibility to the world? Was not a final silence a confirmation of a lie with all its consequences?

This testimony of Lady Byron, so far from being thrown out altogether, as the 'Quarterly' proposes, has a peculiar and specific value from the great forbearance and reticence which characterised the greater part of her life.

The testimony of a person who has shown in every action perfect

friendliness to another comes with the more weight on that account. Testimony extorted by conscience from a parent against a child, or a wife against a husband, where all the other actions of the life prove the existence of kind feeling, is held to be the strongest form of evidence.

The fact that Lady Byron, under the severest temptations and the bitterest insults and injuries, withheld every word by which Lord Byron could be criminated, so long as he and his sister were living, is strong evidence, that, when she did speak, it was not under the influence of ill-will, but of pure conscientious convictions; and the fullest weight ought, therefore, to be given to her testimony.

We are asked now why she ever spoke at all. The fact that her story is known to several persons in England is brought up as if it were a crime. To this we answer, Lady Byron had an undoubted moral right to have exposed the whole story in a public court in 1816, and thus cut herself loose from her husband by a divorce. For the sake of saving her husband and sister from destruction, she waived this right to self-justification, and stood for years a silent sufferer under calumny and misrepresentation. She desired nothing but to retire from the whole subject; to be permitted to enjoy with her child the peace and seclusion that belong to her sex. Her husband made her, through his life and after his death, a subject of such constant discussion, that she must either abandon the current literature of her day, or run the risk of reading more or less about herself in almost every magazine of her time. Conversations with Lord Byron, notes of interviews with Lord Byron, journals of time spent with Lord Byron, were constantly spread before the

public. Leigh Hunt, Galt, Medwin, Trelawney, Lady Blessington, Dr. Kennedy, and Thomas Moore, all poured forth their memorials; and in all she figured prominently. All these had their tribes of reviewers and critics, who also discussed her. The profound mystery of her silence seemed constantly to provoke inquiry. People could not forgive her for not speaking. Her privacy, retirement, and silence were set down as coldness, haughtiness, and contempt of human sympathy. She was constantly challenged to say something: as, for example, in the 'Noctes' of November 1825, six months after Byron's death, Christopher North says, speaking of the burning of the Autobiography,--

> 'I think, since the Memoir was burned by these people, these people are bound to put us in possession of the best evidence they still have the power of producing, in order that we may come to a just conclusion as to a subject upon which, by their act, at least, as much as by any other people's act, we are compelled to consider it our duty to make up our deliberate opinion,--deliberate and decisive. Woe be to those who provoke this curiosity, and will not allay it! Woe be to them! say I. Woe to them! says the world.'

When Lady Byron published her statement, which certainly seemed called for by this language, Christopher North blamed her for doing it, and then again said that she ought to go on and tell the whole story. If she was thus adjured to speak, blamed for speaking, and adjured to speak further, all in one breath, by public prints, there is reason to think that there could not have come less solicitation from private sources,--from friends who had access to her at all hours, whom she loved, by whom she was

beloved, and to whom her refusal to explain might seem a breach of friendship. Yet there is no evidence on record, that we have seen, that she ever had other confidant than her legal counsel, till after all the actors in the events were in their graves, and the daughter, for whose sake largely the secret was guarded, had followed them.

Now, does anyone claim, that, because a woman has sacrificed for twenty years all cravings for human sympathy, and all possibility of perfectly free and unconstrained intercourse with her friends, that she is obliged to go on bearing this same lonely burden to the end of her days?

Let anyone imagine the frightful constraint and solitude implied in this sentence. Let anyone, too, think of its painful complications in life. The roots of a falsehood are far-reaching. Conduct that can only be explained by criminating another must often seem unreasonable and unaccountable; and the most truthful person, who feels bound to keep silence regarding a radical lie of another, must often be placed in positions most trying to conscientiousness. The great merit of 'Caleb Williams' as a novel consists in its philosophical analysis of the utter helplessness of an innocent person who agrees to keep the secret of a guilty one. One sees there how that necessity of silence produces all the effect of falsehood on his part, and deprives him of the confidence and sympathy of those with whom he would take refuge.

For years, this unnatural life was forced on Lady Byron, involving her as in a network, even in her dearest family relations.

That, when all the parties were dead, Lady Byron should allow herself the sympathy of a circle of intimate friends, is something so perfectly proper and natural, that we cannot but wonder that her conduct in this respect has ever been called in question. If it was her right to have had a public expose in 1816, it was certainly her right to show to her own intimate circle the secret of her life when all the principal actors were passed from earth.

The 'Quarterly' speaks as if, by thus waiting, she deprived Lord Byron of the testimony of living witnesses. But there were as many witnesses and partisans dead on her side as on his. Lady Milbanke and Sir Ralph, Sir Samuel Romilly and Lady Anne Barnard were as much dead as Hobhouse, Moore, and others of Byron's partisans.

The 'Quarterly' speaks of Lady Byron as 'running round, and repeating her story to people mostly below her own rank in life.'

To those who know the personal dignity of Lady Byron's manners, represented and dwelt on by her husband in his conversations with Lady Blessington, this coarse and vulgar attack only proves the poverty of a cause which can defend itself by no better weapons.

Lord Byron speaks of his wife as 'highly cultivated;' as having 'a degree of self-control I never saw equalled.'

> 'I am certain,' he says, 'that Lady Byron's first idea is what is due to herself: I mean that it is the undeviating rule of her conduct . .

. . Now, my besetting sin is a want of that self-respect which she has in excess . . . . But, though I accuse Lady Byron of an excess of self-respect, I must, in candour, admit, that, if any person ever had excuse for an extraordinary portion of it, she has; as, in all her thoughts, words, and actions, she is the most decorous woman that ever existed.'

This is the kind of woman who has lately been accused in the public prints as a babbler of secrets and a gossip in regard to her private difficulties with children, grandchildren, and servants. It is a fair specimen of the justice that has generally been meted out to Lady Byron.

In 1836, she was accused of having made a confidant of Campbell, on the strength of having written him a note declining to give him any information, or answer any questions. In July, 1869, she was denounced by 'Blackwood' as a Madame Brinvilliers for keeping such perfect silence on the matter of her husband's character; and in the last 'Quarterly' she is spoken of as a gossip 'running round, and repeating her story to people below her in rank.'

While we are upon this subject, we have a suggestion to make. John Stuart Mill says that utter self-abnegation has been preached to women as a peculiarly feminine virtue. It is true; but there is a moral limit to the value of self-abnegation.

It is a fair question for the moralist, whether it is right and proper wholly to ignore one's personal claims to justice. The teachings of the

Saviour give us warrant for submitting to personal injuries; but both the Saviour and St. Paul manifested bravery in denying false accusations, and asserting innocence.

Lady Byron was falsely accused of having ruined the man of his generation, and caused all his vices and crimes, and all their evil effects on society. She submitted to the accusation for a certain number of years for reasons which commended themselves to her conscience; but when all the personal considerations were removed, and she was about passing from life, it was right, it was just, it was strictly in accordance with the philosophical and ethical character of her mind, and with her habit of considering all things in their widest relations to the good of mankind, that she should give serious attention and consideration to the last duty which she might owe to abstract truth and justice in her generation.

In her letter on the religious state of England, we find her advocating an absolute frankness in all religious parties. She would have all openly confess those doubts, which, from the best of motives, are usually suppressed; and believed, that, as a result of such perfect truthfulness, a wider love would prevail among Christians. This shows the strength of her conviction of the power and the importance of absolute truth; and shows, therefore, that her doubts and conscientious inquiries respecting her duty on this subject are exactly what might have been expected from a person of her character and principles.

Having thus shown that Lady Byron's testimony is the testimony of a woman

of strong and sound mind, that it was not given from malice nor ill-will, that it was given at a proper time and in a proper manner, and for a purpose in accordance with the most elevated moral views, and that it is coincident with all the established facts of this history, and furnishes a perfect solution of every mystery of the case, we think we shall carry the reader with us in saying that it is to be received as absolute truth.

This conviction we arrive at while as yet we are deprived of the statement prepared by Lady Byron, and the proof by which she expected to sustain it; both which, as we understand, are now in the hands of her trustees.

CHAPTER VI. PHYSIOLOGICAL ARGUMENT.

The credibility of the accusation of the unnatural crime charged to Lord Byron is greater than if charged to most men. He was born of parents both of whom were remarkable for perfectly ungoverned passions. There appears to be historical evidence that he was speaking literal truth when he says to Medwin of his father,--

> 'He would have made a bad hero for Hannah More. He ran out three fortunes, and married or ran away with three women . . . He seemed born for his own ruin and that of the other sex. He began by seducing Lady Carmarthen, and spent her four thousand pounds; and, not content with one adventure of this kind, afterwards eloped with Miss Gordon.'--Medwin's Conversations, p.31.

Lady Carmarthen here spoken of was the mother of Mrs. Leigh. Miss Gordon became Lord Byron's mother.

By his own account, and that of Moore, she was a passionate, ungoverned, though affectionate woman. Lord Byron says to Medwin,--

> 'I lost my father when I was only six years of age. My mother, when she was in a passion with me (and I gave her cause enough), used to say, "O you little dog! you are a Byron all over; you are as bad as your father!"'--Ibid., p.37.

By all the accounts of his childhood and early youth, it is made apparent that ancestral causes had sent him into the world with a most perilous and exceptional sensitiveness of brain and nervous system, which it would have required the most judicious course of education to direct safely and happily.

Lord Byron often speaks as if he deemed himself subject to tendencies which might terminate in insanity. The idea is so often mentioned and dwelt upon in his letters, journals, and conversations, that we cannot but ascribe it to some very peculiar experience, and not to mere affectation.

But, in the history of his early childhood and youth, we see no evidence of any original malformation of nature. We see only evidence of one of those organisations, full of hope and full of peril, which adverse influences might easily drive to insanity, but wise physiological training and judicious moral culture might have guided to the most splendid results. But of these he had neither. He was alternately the pet and victim of his mother's tumultuous nature, and equally injured both by her love and her anger. A Scotch maid of religious character gave him early serious impressions of religion, and thus added the element of an awakened conscience to the conflicting ones of his character.

Education, in the proper sense of the word, did not exist in England in those days. Physiological considerations of the influence of the body on

the soul, of the power of brain and nerve over moral development, had then not even entered the general thought of society. The school and college education literally taught him nothing but the ancient classics, of whose power in exciting and developing the animal passions Byron often speaks.

The morality of the times is strikingly exemplified even in its literary criticism.

For example: One of Byron's poems, written while a schoolboy at Harrow, is addressed to 'My Son.' Mr. Moore, and the annotator of the standard edition of Byron's poems, gravely give the public their speculations on the point, whether Lord Byron first became a father while a schoolboy at Harrow; and go into particulars in relation to a certain infant, the claim to which lay between Lord Byron and another schoolfellow. It is not the nature of the event itself, so much as the cool, unembarrassed manner in which it is discussed, that gives the impression of the state of public morals. There is no intimation of anything unusual, or discreditable to the school, in the event, and no apparent suspicion that it will be regarded as a serious imputation on Lord Byron's character.

Modern physiological developments would lead any person versed in the study of the reciprocal influence of physical and moral laws to anticipate the most serious danger to such an organisation as Lord Byron's, from a precocious development of the passions. Alcoholic and narcotic stimulants, in the case of such a person, would be regarded as little less than suicidal, and an early course of combined drinking and

licentiousness as tending directly to establish those unsound conditions which lead towards moral insanity. Yet not only Lord Byron's testimony, but every probability from the licence of society, goes to show that this was exactly what did take place.

Neither restrained by education, nor warned by any correct physiological knowledge, nor held in check by any public sentiment, he drifted directly upon the fatal rock.

Here we give Mr. Moore full credit for all his abatements in regard to Lord Byron's excesses in his early days. Moore makes the point very strongly that he was not, de facto, even so bad as many of his associates; and we agree with him. Byron's physical organisation was originally as fine and sensitive as that of the most delicate woman. He possessed the faculty of moral ideality in a high degree; and he had not, in the earlier part of his life, an attraction towards mere brutal vice. His physical sensitiveness was so remarkable that he says of himself, 'A dose of salts has the effect of a temporary inebriation, like light champagne, upon me.' Yet this exceptionally delicately-organised boy and youth was in a circle where not to conform to the coarse drinking-customs of his day was to incur censure and ridicule. That he early acquired the power of bearing large quantities of liquor is manifested by the record in his Journal, that, on the day when he read the severe 'Edinburgh' article upon his schoolboy poems, he drank three bottles of claret at a sitting.

Yet Byron was so far superior to his times, that some vague impulses to

physiological prudence seem to have suggested themselves to him, and been acted upon with great vigour. He never could have lived so long as he did, under the exhaustive process of every kind of excess, if he had not re-enforced his physical nature by an assiduous care of his muscular system. He took boxing-lessons, and distinguished himself in all athletic exercises.

He also had periods in which he seemed to try vaguely to retrieve himself from dissipation, and to acquire self-mastery by what he called temperance.

But, ignorant and excessive in all his movements, his very efforts at temperance were intemperate. From violent excesses in eating and drinking, he would pass to no less unnatural periods of utter abstinence. Thus the very conservative power which Nature has of adapting herself to any settled course was lost. The extreme sensitiveness produced by long periods of utter abstinence made the succeeding debauch more maddening and fatal. He was like a fine musical instrument, whose strings were every day alternating between extreme tension and perfect laxity. We have in his Journal many passages, of which the following is a specimen:--

'I have dined regularly to-day, for the first time since Sunday last; this being Sabbath too,--all the rest, tea and dry biscuits, six per diem. I wish to God I had not dined, now! It kills me with heaviness, stupor, and horrible dreams; and yet it was but a pint of bucellas, and fish. Meat I never touch, nor much vegetable diet. I wish I were in the country, to take exercise, instead of being obliged

to cool by abstinence, in lieu of it. I should not so much mind a little accession of flesh: my bones can well bear it. But the worst is, the Devil always came with it, till I starved him out; and I will not be the slave of any appetite. If I do err, it shall be my heart, at least, that heralds the way. O my head! how it aches! The horrors of digestion! I wonder how Bonaparte's dinner agrees with him.'--Moore's Life, vol. ii. p.264.

From all the contemporary history and literature of the times, therefore, we have reason to believe that Lord Byron spoke the exact truth when he said to Medwin,--

'My own master at an age when I most required a guide, left to the dominion of my passions when they were the strongest, with a fortune anticipated before I came into possession of it, and a constitution impaired by early excesses, I commenced my travels, in 1809, with a joyless indifference to the world and all that was before me.'--Medwin's Conversations, p.42.

Utter prostration of the whole physical man from intemperate excess, the deadness to temptation which comes from utter exhaustion, was his condition, according to himself and Moore, when he first left England, at twenty-one years of age.

In considering his subsequent history, we are to take into account that it was upon the brain and nerve-power, thus exhausted by early excess, that the draughts of sudden and rapid literary composition began to be

made. There was something unnatural and unhealthy in the rapidity, clearness, and vigour with which his various works followed each other. Subsequently to the first two cantos of 'Childe Harold,' 'The Bride of Abydos,' 'The Corsair,' 'The Giaour,' 'Lara,' 'Parisina,' and 'The Siege of Corinth,' all followed close upon each other, in a space of less than three years, and those the three most critical years of his life. 'The Bride of Abydos' came out in the autumn of 1813, and was written in a week; and 'The Corsair' was composed in thirteen days. A few months more than a year before his marriage, and the brief space of his married life, was the period in which all this literary labour was performed, while yet he was running the wild career of intrigue and fashionable folly. He speaks of 'Lara' as being tossed off in the intervals between masquerades and balls, etc. It is with the physical results of such unnatural efforts that we have now chiefly to do. Every physiologist would say that the demands of such poems on a healthy brain, in that given space, must have been exhausting; but when we consider that they were cheques drawn on a bank broken by early extravagance, and that the subject was prodigally spending vital forces in every other direction at the same time, one can scarcely estimate the physiological madness of such a course as Lord Byron's.

It is evident from his Journal, and Moore's account, that any amount of physical force which was for the time restored by his first foreign travel was recklessly spent in this period, when he threw himself with a mad recklessness into London society in the time just preceding his marriage. The revelations made in Moore's Memoir of this period are sad enough: those to Medwin are so appalling as to the state of contemporary

society in England, as to require, at least, the benefit of the doubt for which Lord Byron's habitual carelessness of truth gave scope. His adventures with ladies of the highest rank in England are there paraded with a freedom of detail that respect for womanhood must lead every woman to question. The only thing that is unquestionable is, that Lord Byron made these assertions to Medwin, not as remorseful confessions, but as relations of his bonnes fortunes, and that Medwin published them in the very face of the society to which they related.

When Lord Byron says, 'I have seen a great deal of Italian society, and swum in a gondola; but nothing could equal the profligacy of high life in England . . . when I knew it,' he makes certainly strong assertions, if we remember what Mr. Moore reveals of the harem kept in Venice.

But when Lord Byron intimates that three married women in his own rank in life, who had once held illicit relations with him, made wedding-visits to his wife at one time, we must hope that he drew on his active imagination, as he often did, in his statements in regard to women.

When he relates at large his amour with Lord Melbourne's wife, and represents her as pursuing him with an insane passion, to which he with difficulty responded; and when he says that she tracked a rival lady to his lodgings, and came into them herself, disguised as a carman--one hopes that he exaggerates. And what are we to make of passages like this?--

'There was a lady at that time, double my own age, the mother of

several children who were perfect angels, with whom I formed a liaison that continued without interruption for eight months. She told me she was never in love till she was thirty, and I thought myself so with her when she was forty. I never felt a stronger passion, which she returned with equal ardour . . . . . .

'Strange as it may seem, she gained, as all women do, an influence over me so strong that I had great difficulty in breaking with her.'

Unfortunately, these statements, though probably exaggerated, are, for substance, borne out in the history of the times. With every possible abatement for exaggeration in these statements, there remains still undoubted evidence from other sources that Lord Byron exercised a most peculiar and fatal power over the moral sense of the women with whom he was brought in relation; and that love for him, in many women, became a sort of insanity, depriving them of the just use of their faculties. All this makes his fatal history both possible and probable.

Even the article in 'Blackwood,' written in 1825 for the express purpose of vindicating his character, admits that his name had been coupled with those of three, four, or more women of rank, whom it speaks of as 'licentious, unprincipled, characterless women.'

That such a course, in connection with alternate extremes of excess and abstinence in eating and drinking, and the immense draughts on the brain-power of rapid and brilliant composition, should have ended in that abnormal state in which cravings for unnatural vice give indications of

approaching brain-disease, seems only too probable.

This symptom of exhausted vitality becomes often a frequent type in periods of very corrupt society. The dregs of the old Greek and Roman civilisation were foul with it; and the apostle speaks of the turning of the use of the natural into that which is against nature, as the last step in abandonment.

The very literature of such periods marks their want of physical and moral soundness. Having lost all sense of what is simple and natural and pure, the mind delights to dwell on horrible ideas, which give a shuddering sense of guilt and crime. All the writings of this fatal period of Lord Byron's life are more or less intense histories of unrepentant guilt and remorse or of unnatural crime. A recent writer in 'Temple Bar' brings to light the fact, that 'The Bride of Abydos,' the first of the brilliant and rapid series of poems which began in the period immediately preceding his marriage, was, in its first composition, an intense story of love between a brother and sister in a Turkish harem; that Lord Byron declared, in a letter to Galt, that it was drawn from real life; that, in compliance with the prejudices of the age, he altered the relationship to that of cousins before publication.

This same writer goes on to show, by a series of extracts from Lord Byron's published letters and journals, that his mind about this time was in a fearfully unnatural state, and suffering singular and inexplicable agonies of remorse; that, though he was accustomed fearlessly to confide to his friends immoralities which would be looked upon as damning, there

was now a secret to which he could not help alluding in his letters, but which he told Moore he could not tell now, but 'some day or other when we are veterans.' He speaks of his heart as eating itself out; of a mysterious person, whom he says, 'God knows I love too well, and the Devil probably too.' He wrote a song, and sent it to Moore, addressed to a partner in some awful guilt, whose very name he dares not mention, because

'There is grief in the sound, there is guilt in the fame.'

He speaks of struggles of remorse, of efforts at repentance, and returns to guilt, with a sort of horror very different from the well-pleased air with which he relates to Medwin his common intrigues and adulteries. He speaks of himself generally as oppressed by a frightful, unnatural gloom and horror, and, when occasionally happy, 'not in a way that can or ought to last.'

'The Giaour,' 'The Corsair,' 'Lara,' 'Parisina,' 'The Siege of Corinth,' and 'Manfred,' all written or conceived about this period of his life, give one picture of a desperate, despairing, unrepentant soul, whom suffering maddens, but cannot reclaim.

In all these he paints only the one woman, of concentrated, unconsidering passion, ready to sacrifice heaven and defy hell for a guilty man, beloved in spite of religion or reason. In this unnatural literature, the stimulus of crime is represented as intensifying love. Medora, Gulnare, the Page in 'Lara,' Parisina, and the lost sister of Manfred,

love the more intensely because the object of the love is a criminal, outlawed by God and man. The next step beyond this is--madness.

The work of Dr. Forbes Winslow on 'Obscure Diseases of the Brain and Nerves' {258} contains a passage so very descriptive of the case of Lord Byron, that it might seem to have been written for it. The sixth chapter of his work, on 'Anomalous and Masked Affections of the Mind,' contains, in our view, the only clue that can unravel the sad tragedy of Byron's life. He says, p.87,--

> 'These forms of unrecognised mental disorder are not always accompanied by any well-marked disturbance of the bodily health requiring medical attention, or any obvious departure from a normal state of thought and conduct such as to justify legal interference; neither do these affections always incapacitate the party from engaging in the ordinary business of life . . . . The change may have progressed insidiously and stealthily, having slowly and almost imperceptibly induced important molecular modifications in the delicate vesicular neurine of the brain, ultimately resulting in some aberration of the ideas, alteration of the affections, or perversion of the propensities or instincts. . . .
>
> 'Mental disorder of a dangerous character has been known for years to be stealthily advancing, without exciting the slightest notion of its presence, until some sad and terrible catastrophe, homicide, or suicide, has painfully awakened attention to its existence. Persons suffering from latent insanity often affect singularity of dress,

gait, conversation, and phraseology. The most trifling circumstances stimulate their excitability. They are martyrs to ungovernable paroxysms of passion, are inflamed to a state of demoniacal fury by the most insignificant of causes, and occasionally lose all sense of delicacy of feeling, sentiment, refinement of manners and conversation. Such manifestations of undetected mental disorder may be seen associated with intellectual and moral qualities of the highest order.'

In another place, Dr. Winslow again adverts to this latter symptom, which was strikingly marked in the case of Lord Byron:--

'All delicacy and decency of thought are occasionally banished from the mind, so effectually does the principle of thought in these attacks succumb to the animal instincts and passions . . . .

'Such cases will commonly be found associated with organic predisposition to insanity or cerebral disease . . . . Modifications of the malady are seen allied with genius. The biographies of Cowper, Burns, Byron, Johnson, Pope, and Haydon establish that the most exalted intellectual conditions do not escape unscathed.

'In early childhood, this form of mental disturbance may, in many cases, be detected. To its existence is often to be traced the motiveless crimes of the young.'

No one can compare this passage of Dr. Forbes Winslow with the incidents

we have already cited as occurring in that fatal period before the separation of Lord and Lady Byron, and not feel that the hapless young wife was indeed struggling with those inflexible natural laws, which, at some stages of retribution, involve in their awful sweep the guilty with the innocent. She longed to save; but he was gone past redemption. Alcoholic stimulants and licentious excesses, without doubt, had produced those unseen changes in the brain, of which Dr. Forbes Winslow speaks; and the results were terrible in proportion to the peculiar fineness and delicacy of the organism deranged.

Alas! the history of Lady Byron is the history of too many women in every rank of life who are called, in agonies of perplexity and fear, to watch that gradual process by which physical excesses change the organism of the brain, till slow, creeping, moral insanity comes on. The woman who is the helpless victim of cruelties which only unnatural states of the brain could invent, who is heart-sick to-day and dreads to-morrow,--looks in hopeless horror on the fatal process by which a lover and a protector changes under her eyes, from day to day, to a brute and a fiend.

Lady Byron's married life--alas! it is lived over in many a cottage and tenement-house, with no understanding on either side of the cause of the woeful misery.

Dr. Winslow truly says, 'The science of these brain-affections is yet in its infancy in England.' At that time, it had not even begun to be. Madness was a fixed point; and the inquiries into it had no nicety. Its treatment, if established, had no redeeming power. Insanity simply

locked a man up as a dangerous being; and the very suggestion of it, therefore, was resented as an injury.

A most peculiar and affecting feature of that form of brain disease which hurries its victim, as by an overpowering mania, into crime, is, that often the moral faculties and the affections remain to a degree unimpaired, and protest with all their strength against the outrage. Hence come conflicts and agonies of remorse proportioned to the strength of the moral nature. Byron, more than any other one writer, may be called the poet of remorse. His passionate pictures of this feeling seem to give new power to the English language:--

'There is a war, a chaos of the mind,
When all its elements convulsed--combined,
Lie dark and jarring with perturbed force,
And gnashing with impenitent remorse,
That juggling fiend, who never spake before,
But cries, "I warned thee!" when the deed is o'er.'

It was this remorse that formed the only redeeming feature of the case. Its eloquence, its agonies, won from all hearts the interest that we give to a powerful nature in a state of danger and ruin; and it may be hoped that this feeling, which tempers the stern justice of human judgments, may prove only a faint image of the wider charity of Him whose thoughts are as far above ours as the heaven is above the earth.

CHAPTER VII. HOW COULD SHE LOVE HIM?

It has seemed, to some, wholly inconsistent, that Lady Byron, if this story were true, could retain any kindly feeling for Lord Byron, or any tenderness for his memory; that the profession implied a certain hypocrisy: but, in this sad review, we may see how the woman who once had loved him, might, in spite of every wrong he had heaped upon her, still have looked on this awful wreck and ruin chiefly with pity. While she stood afar, and refused to justify or join in the polluted idolatry which defended his vices, there is evidence in her writings that her mind often went back mournfully, as a mother's would, to the early days when he might have been saved.

One of her letters in Robinson's Memoirs, in regard to his religious opinions, shows with what intense earnestness she dwelt upon the unhappy influences of his childhood and youth, and those early theologies which led him to regard himself as one of the reprobate. She says,--

> 'Not merely from casual expressions, but from the whole tenor of Lord Byron's feelings, I could not but conclude that he was a believer in the inspiration of the Bible, and had the gloomiest Calvinistic tenets. To that unhappy view of the relation of the creature to the Creator I have always ascribed the misery of his life.
>
> 'It is enough for me to know that he who thinks his transgression

beyond forgiveness . . . has righteousness beyond that of the self-satisfied sinner. It is impossible for me to doubt, that, could he once have been assured of pardon, his living faith in moral duty, and love of virtue ("I love the virtues that I cannot claim"), would have conquered every temptation. Judge, then, how I must hate the creed that made him see God as an Avenger, and not as a Father! My own impressions were just the reverse, but could have but little weight; and it was in vain to seek to turn his thoughts from that fixed idea with which he connected his personal peculiarity as a stamp. Instead of being made happier by any apparent good, he felt convinced that every blessing would be turned into a curse to him . . . "The worst of it is, I do believe," he said. I, like all connected with him, was broken against the rock of predestination. I may be pardoned for my frequent reference to the sentiment (expressed by him), that I was only sent to show him the happiness he was forbidden to enjoy.'

In this letter we have the heart, not of the wife, but of the mother,--the love that searches everywhere for extenuations of the guilt it is forced to confess.

That Lady Byron was not alone in ascribing such results to the doctrines of Calvinism, in certain cases, appears from the language of the Thirty-nine Articles, which says:--

'As the godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the workings of the spirit of

Christ; . . . so, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into recklessness of most unclean living,--no less perilous than desperation.'

Lord Byron's life is an exact commentary on these words, which passed under the revision of Calvin himself.

The whole tone of this letter shows not only that Lady Byron never lost her deep interest in her husband, but that it was by this experience that all her religious ideas were modified. There is another of these letters in which she thus speaks of her husband's writings and character:--

'The author of the article on "Goethe" appears to me to have the mind which could dispel the illusion about another poet, without depreciating his claims . . . to the truest inspiration.

'Who has sought to distinguish between the holy and the unholy in that spirit? to prove, by the very degradation of the one, how high the other was. A character is never done justice to by extenuating its faults: so I do not agree to nisi bonum. It is kinder to read the blotted page.'

These letters show that Lady Byron's idea was that, even were the whole mournful truth about Lord Byron fully told, there was still a foundation left for pity and mercy. She seems to have remembered, that if his sins

were peculiar, so also were his temptations; and to have schooled herself for years to gather up, and set in order in her memory, all that yet remained precious in this great ruin. Probably no English writer that ever has made the attempt could have done this more perfectly. Though Lady Byron was not a poet par excellence, yet she belonged to an order of souls fully equal to Lord Byron. Hers was more the analytical mind of the philosopher than the creative mind of the poet; and it was, for that reason, the one mind in our day capable of estimating him fully both with justice and mercy. No person in England had a more intense sensibility to genius, in its loftier acceptation, than Lady Byron; and none more completely sympathised with what was pure and exalted in her husband's writings.

There is this peculiarity in Lord Byron, that the pure and the impure in his poetry often run side by side without mixing,--as one may see at Geneva the muddy stream of the Arve and the blue waters of the Rhone flowing together unmingled. What, for example, can be nobler, and in a higher and tenderer moral strain than his lines on the dying gladiator, in 'Childe Harold'? What is more like the vigour of the old Hebrew Scriptures than his thunderstorm in the Alps? What can more perfectly express moral ideality of the highest kind than the exquisite descriptions of Aurora Raby,--pure and high in thought and language, occurring, as they do, in a work full of the most utter vileness?

Lady Byron's hopes for her husband fastened themselves on all the noble fragments yet remaining in that shattered temple of his mind which lay blackened and thunder-riven; and she looked forward to a sphere beyond

this earth, where infinite mercy should bring all again to symmetry and order. If the strict theologian must regret this as an undue latitude of charity, let it at least be remembered that it was a charity which sprang from a Christian virtue, and which she extended to every human being, however lost, however low. In her view, the mercy which took him was mercy that could restore all.

In my recollections of the interview with Lady Byron, when this whole history was presented, I can remember that it was with a softened and saddened feeling that I contemplated the story, as one looks on some awful, inexplicable ruin.

The last letter which I addressed to Lady Byron upon this subject will show that such was the impression of the whole interview. It was in reply to the one written on the death of my son:--

'Jan. 30, 1858.

'MY DEAR FRIEND,--I did long to hear from you at a time when few knew how to speak, because I knew that you had known everything that sorrow can teach,--you, whose whole life has been a crucifixion, a long ordeal.

'But I believe that the Lamb, who stands for ever "in the midst of the throne, as it had been slain," has everywhere His followers,--those who seem sent into the world, as He was, to suffer for the redemption of others; and, like Him, they must look to the joy set before

them,--of redeeming others.

'I often think that God called you to this beautiful and terrible ministry when He suffered you to link your destiny with one so strangely gifted and so fearfully tempted. Perhaps the reward that is to meet you when you enter within the veil where you must so soon pass will be to see that spirit, once chained and defiled, set free and purified; and to know that to you it has been given, by your life of love and faith, to accomplish this glorious change.

'I think increasingly on the subject on which you conversed with me once,--the future state of retribution. It is evident to me that the spirit of Christianity has produced in the human spirit a tenderness of love which wholly revolts from the old doctrine on this subject; and I observe, that, the more Christ-like anyone becomes, the more difficult it seems for them to accept it as hitherto presented. And yet, on the contrary, it was Christ who said, "Fear Him that is able to destroy both soul and body in hell;" and the most appalling language is that of Christ himself.

'Certain ideas, once prevalent, certainly must be thrown off. An endless infliction for past sins was once the doctrine: that we now generally reject. The doctrine now generally taught is, that an eternal persistence in evil necessitates everlasting suffering, since evil induces misery by the eternal nature of things; and this, I fear, is inferable from the analogies of Nature, and confirmed by the whole implication of the Bible.

'What attention have you given to this subject? and is there any fair way of disposing of the current of assertion, and the still deeper under-current of implication, on this subject, without admitting one which loosens all faith in revelation, and throws us on pure naturalism? But of one thing I always feel sure: probation does not end with this present life; and the number of the saved may therefore be infinitely greater than the world's history leads us to suppose.

'I think the Bible implies a great crisis, a struggle, an agony, in which God and Christ and all the good are engaged in redeeming from sin; and we are not to suppose that the little portion that is done for souls as they pass between the two doors of birth and death is all.

'The Bible is certainly silent there. The primitive Church believed in the mercies of an intermediate state; and it was only the abuse of it by Romanism that drove the Church into its present position, which, I think, is wholly indefensible, and wholly irreconcilable with the spirit of Christ. For if it were the case, that probation in all cases begins and ends here, God's example would surely be one that could not be followed, and He would seem to be far less persevering than even human beings in efforts to save.

'Nothing is plainer than that it would be wrong to give up any mind to eternal sin till every possible thing had been done for its recovery; and that is so clearly not the case here, that I can see that, with

thoughtful minds, this belief would cut the very roots of religious faith in God: for there is a difference between facts that we do not understand, and facts which we do understand, and perceive to be wholly irreconcilable with a certain character professed by God.

'If God says He is love, and certain ways of explaining Scripture make Him less loving and patient than man, then we make Scripture contradict itself. Now, as no passage of Scripture limits probation to this life, and as one passage in Peter certainly unequivocally asserts that Christ preached to the spirits in prison while His body lay in the grave, I am clear upon this point.

'But it is also clear, that if there be those who persist in refusing God's love, who choose to dash themselves for ever against the inflexible laws of the universe, such souls must for ever suffer.

'There may be souls who hate purity because it reveals their vileness; who refuse God's love, and prefer eternal conflict with it. For such there can be no peace. Even in this life, we see those whom the purest self-devoting love only inflames to madness; and we have only to suppose an eternal persistence in this to suppose eternal misery.

'But on this subject we can only leave all reverently in the hands of that Being whose almighty power is "declared chiefly in showing mercy."'

CHAPTER VIII. CONCLUSION.

In leaving this subject, I have an appeal to make to the men, and more especially to the women, who have been my readers.

In justice to Lady Byron, it must be remembered that this publication of her story is not her act, but mine. I trust you have already conceded, that, in so severe and peculiar a trial, she had a right to be understood fully by her immediate circle of friends, and to seek of them counsel in view of the moral questions to which such very exceptional circumstances must have given rise. Her communication to me was not an address to the public: it was a statement of the case for advice. True, by leaving the whole, unguarded by pledge or promise, it left discretionary power with me to use it if needful.

You, my sisters, are to judge whether the accusation laid against Lady Byron by the 'Blackwood,' in 1869, was not of so barbarous a nature as to justify my producing the truth I held in my hands in reply.

The 'Blackwood' claimed a right to re-open the subject because it was not a private but a public matter. It claimed that Lord Byron's unfortunate marriage might have changed not only his own destiny, but that of all England. It suggested, that, but for this, instead of wearing out his life in vice, and corrupting society by impure poetry, he might, at this day, have been leading the counsels of the State, and helping the onward

movements of the world. Then it directly charged Lady Byron with meanly forsaking her husband in a time of worldly misfortune; with fabricating a destructive accusation of crime against him, and confirming this accusation by years of persistent silence more guilty than open assertion.

It has been alleged, that, even admitting that Lady Byron's story were true, it never ought to have been told. Is it true, then, that a woman has not the same right to individual justice that a man has? If the cases were reversed, would it have been thought just that Lord Byron should go down in history loaded with accusations of crime because he could be only vindicated by exposing the crime of his wife?

It has been said that the crime charged on Lady Byron was comparatively unimportant, and the one against Lord Byron was deadly.

But the 'Blackwood,' in opening the controversy, called Lady Byron by the name of an unnatural female criminal, whose singular atrocities alone entitle her to infamous notoriety; and the crime charged upon her was sufficient to warrant the comparison.

Both crimes are foul, unnatural, horrible; and there is no middle ground between the admission of the one or the other.

You must either conclude that a woman, all whose other works, words, and deeds were generous, just, and gentle, committed this one monstrous exceptional crime, without a motive, and against all the analogies of her

character, and all the analogies of her treatment of others; or you must suppose that a man known by all testimony to have been boundlessly licentious, who took the very course which, by every physiological law, would have led to unnatural results, did, at last, commit an unnatural crime.

The question, whether I did right, when Lady Byron was thus held up as an abandoned criminal by the 'Blackwood,' to interpose my knowledge of the real truth in her defence, is a serious one; but it is one for which I must account to God alone, and in which, without any contempt of the opinions of my fellow-creatures, I must say, that it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment.

I had in the case a responsibility very different from that of many others. I had been consulted in relation to the publication of this story by Lady Byron, at a time when she had it in her power to have exhibited it with all its proofs, and commanded an instant conviction. I have reason to think that my advice had some weight in suppressing that disclosure. I gave that advice under the impression that the Byron controversy was a thing for ever passed, and never likely to return.

It had never occurred to me, that, nine years after Lady Byron's death, a standard English periodical would declare itself free to re-open this controversy, when all the generation who were her witnesses had passed from earth; and that it would re-open it in the most savage form of accusation, and with the indorsement and commendation of a book of the vilest slanders, edited by Lord Byron's mistress.

Let the reader mark the retributions of justice. The accusations of the 'Blackwood,' in 1869, were simply an intensified form of those first concocted by Lord Byron in his 'Clytemnestra' poem of 1816. He forged that weapon, and bequeathed it to his party. The 'Blackwood' took it up, gave it a sharper edge, and drove it to the heart of Lady Byron's fame. The result has been the disclosure of this history. It is, then, Lord Byron himself, who, by his network of wiles, his ceaseless persecutions of his wife, his efforts to extend his partisanship beyond the grave, has brought on this tumultuous exposure. He, and he alone, is the cause of this revelation.

And now I have one word to say to those in England who, with all the facts and documents in their hands which could at once have cleared Lady Byron's fame, allowed the barbarous assault of the 'Blackwood' to go over the civilised world without a reply. I speak to those who, knowing that I am speaking the truth, stand silent; to those who have now the ability to produce the facts and documents by which this cause might be instantly settled, and who do not produce them.

I do not judge them; but I remind them that a day is coming when they and I must stand side by side at the great judgment-seat,--I to give an account for my speaking, they for their silence.

In that day, all earthly considerations will have vanished like morning mists, and truth or falsehood, justice or injustice, will be the only realities.

In that day, God, who will judge the secrets of all men, will judge between this man and this woman. Then, if never before, the full truth shall be told both of the depraved and dissolute man who made it his life's object to defame the innocent, and the silent, the self-denying woman who made it her life's object to give space for repentance to the guilty.

PART III. MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS.

THE TRUE STORY OF LADY BYRON'S LIFE,
AS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN 'THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY.'

The reading world of America has lately been presented with a book which is said to sell rapidly, and which appears to meet with universal favour.

The subject of the book may be thus briefly stated: The mistress of Lord Byron comes before the world for the sake of vindicating his fame from slanders and aspersions cast on him by his wife. The story of the mistress versus wife may be summed up as follows:--